



*The*  
**BOY SCOUTS  
UNDER  
SEALED ORDERS**  
LIEUT. HOWARD PAYSON



This Book belongs to




CHS-(46) P









Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024



Tubby shouted encouragingly to them from time to time as they slowly made their way along.—Page 54

# THE BOY SCOUTS UNDER SEALED ORDERS

BY  
LIEUT. HOWARD PAYSON

AUTHOR OF "THE MOTOR CYCLE SERIES," "THE BOY SCOUTS OF THE  
EAGLE PATROL," "THE BOY SCOUTS ON THE RANGE," "THE BOY  
SCOUTS AND THE ARMY AIRSHIP," "THE BOY SCOUTS' MOUNTAIN  
CAMP," "THE BOY SCOUTS FOR UNCLE SAM," "THE BOY  
SCOUTS AT THE PANAMA CANAL," "THE BOY SCOUTS  
UNDER FIRE IN MEXICO," "THE BOY SCOUTS ON  
BELGIAN BATTLEFIELDS," "THE BOY SCOUTS  
WITH THE ALLIES IN FRANCE," "THE BOY  
SCOUTS AT THE PANAMA-PACIFIC  
EXPOSITION," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
CHARLES L. WRENN

NEW YORK  
HURST & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS



Copyright, 1916,  
BY  
HURST & COMPANY

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. WITH THE EAGLE PATROL SCOUTS	5
II. THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURE . .	17
III. OPENING THE SEALED PACKET . .	26
IV. A STRANGE COMMISSION . . .	36
V. RESCUED FROM THE BOG . . .	47
VI. FOR SERVICES RENDERED . . .	58
VII. IN THE SCRUB TIMBER . . .	69
VIII. TUBBY MEETS WITH A LOSS . .	80
IX. UNEXPECTED GUESTS . . . .	91
X. A CLEAR FIELD . . . . .	102
XI. A NEW RECRUIT . . . . .	113
XII. A BROKEN CIRCUIT . . . . .	124
XIII. WANDERING IN LONESOME LAND .	135
XIV. A HAPPENING IN THE SCRUB . .	146
XV. CLOSE TO SUCCESS . . . . .	157
XVI. WRESTLING WITH PHANTOMS . .	168
XVII. THE FIERCE SUMMER STORM . .	179
XVIII. MAKING THE BEST OF IT . . .	190
XIX. TUBBY HAS AN ADVENTURE . .	201
XX. TREED BY WILD DOGS . . . .	212

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXI.	THE TIME LIMIT . . . . .	223
XXII.	POOR BILL . . . . .	234
XXIII.	THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY AT LAST	245
XXIV.	WHEN THE STAGE WAS SET . . .	256
XXV.	THE WONDERFUL REVELATION . .	267
XXVI.	LOOKING BACKWARD . . . . .	278
XXVII.	ORDERS FULFILLED . . . . .	295



# The Boy Scouts Under Sealed Orders.

## CHAPTER I.

WITH THE EAGLE PATROL SCOUTS.

"It's time Rob came along, don't you think so, fellows?"

"He said he expected to join us here at the crossroads, Tubby. There was mail due at the post office. Rob told me he expects a letter from California."

"Is that so, Merritt? I guess it would be from that Mr. Curley, head of the Golden Gate Aviation Supply Company. He seemed to take a great fancy to our scout leader when some of us were out at the big Fair."

"Our comrade, Hiram Nelson, was lucky to sell his rights in that little aeroplane stabilizer he had invented. Five thousand dollars is a whole lot of money for a boy to earn. I've never forgiven myself because I was out of town when

the other fellows had the chance to make that glorious trip."

"Oh! well, Merritt, there may be heaps of other good times coming, you know," sagely observed the fat boy in the faded suit of khaki, and who answered to the suggestive name of "Tubby."

This was no other than the only and original Tubby Hopkins, and any one observing his girth of waist would immediately decide that he had certainly been well named by his chums.

His two comrades, also garbed as Boy Scouts, were Merritt Crawford and Andy Bowles. The former was a corporal, and really second in command of the Hampton Troop, while Andy filled the post of bugler with considerable ability.

The trio of wide-awake lads had perched upon the topmost rail of a fence. It was at a cross-roads just outside the limits of the Long Island town where all of them had their homes. The time was well along in the latter part of August, with the end of the summer vacation drawing on apace.

Doubtless the vast majority of boys who read this volume are already well acquainted with the activities of certain members of the Eagle Patrol belonging to Hampton Troop. If such, however,

should not be the case, they would be wise if they immediately procured previous volumes of this Series, so as to enjoy the pleasure of following Rob Blake and his chums over field and flood.

As usual, Tubby was whittling. He seemed to be more or less of a Yankee when it came to keeping his knife-blade busy as his thoughts moved. Merritt made a grimace when given that assurance by his fat comrade.

"That's all very good, Tubby," he said, shrugging his shoulders in a peculiar way he had that spoke volumes, "but just see what heaps of fine times I've been missing of late, will you? When you, Rob and Andy here were taking in the wonderful sights of the great Fair out on the Coast, and enjoying the remarkable scenery of the Canadian Pacific road on the way back home, there I was with my folks down at that dinky little village in Maine, visiting my mother's people. Dad couldn't go along, you know. He is running the leading auto repair place and blacksmith shop in this part of Long Island. The business wouldn't allow him to get away. So mother insisted on my coming along, as she wasn't feeling very well."

"But hold on there, Merritt," objected Andy, "you did have lots and lots of good times, you



remember, for you told us there never was such fine bass fishing as that afforded by the lake near your grandmother's farm."

Merritt gave a little embarrassed laugh, after the manner of a boy who, at heart, is half ashamed of having uttered a complaint.

"That's right, fellows," he hastened to say, frankly, "and I reckon I'm silly to put up a bleat when I did have such glorious times with the gamey Maine bronzed-back fighters. But every time I hear about the thousand-and-one things you saw out there in California, why I can't help feeling envious over your luck."

"But then, Merritt," remarked Andy, quickly, "you did see wonderful sights when across on the other side last year. You were near the firing line of the Allies and the Teutons. That was an experience mighty few scouts can say they ever had. Rob, Tubby and you, if you live to the age of old Methuselah, will never forget what you saw and did then."\*

"Hiram Nelson has been as busy as hops ever since he sold the patent of his little aeroplane stabilizer to that company out in California,"

---

\*See "The Boy Scouts on Belgian Battlefields," and also "The Boy Scouts With the Allies in France."

broke in 'Tubby, reflectively. "I'm wondering what that fellow will get up next to help along the science of flying in heavier-than-air machines."

"He's got something he wants to show us to-day, Rob said," replied Andy. "We're all going to be bound to promise on our word of honor to keep as mum as an oyster about it. Hiram's sure to make a name for himself some of these fine days, you mark what I'm telling you."

"Of course, I'm partly guessing from a few words he let fall one time," Merritt went on to say, thoughtfully, "but I've got an idea Hiram is trying to invent some kind of gyroscope affair that'll keep an aeroplane from turning over, no matter if the pilot is compelled to use both hands when firing a gun, or throwing a bomb."

"Gee whiz!" ejaculated Andy Bowles, impetuously, "now d'ye know I had an idea it was going to be a sort of parachute affair that would save an unlucky pilot from being dashed down to the earth like a stone, in case his machine went back on him."

"Well, it might be Hiram is working on several different arrangements," admitted Merritt. "Ever since he got that five thousand dollars for

his stabilizer he's devoted nearly every minute of his time to work. He had that little shop built out on Granger's farm, because the town boys wouldn't let him alone, he said, but kept trying to peek in at him. And now when our assistant scout master, Rob Blake, shows up we expect to pay Hiram a little visit on invitation, and see just what he's been up to these days."

"Things around Hampton seem to be keeping pretty quiet," observed the busy whittler. "When the fall comes, as it will as soon as school commences, we expect to have four patrols in the field, with a fifth forming. The Hawks, the Eagles, the Black Fox and the Badger have their full quota of eight each. Yes, and p'raps there'll be little out of the common doing this season."

"Why, would you believe it," Andy went on to say, a tinge of real regret in his voice, for he dearly loved action and excitement, "even those former terrors of the town, Max Ramsay and Hodge Berry, have simmered down. And with that other chap, Jared Applegate, away, who used to give us scouts lots of trouble, the dove of peace seems to have taken up her abode here."

"But then you ran across Jared out there in California," Merritt submitted, "which goes to



show how small this world is. He was up to his old tricks of doing mean things. Jared has got it in his system to be a trickster, and no matter where he turns up he'll be found trying to work somebody for graft."

"Well," remarked Andy, with a chuckle, "he came mighty near getting himself in a peck of trouble on the last occasion we saw him. Fact is, only for Rob's feeling sorry for the fellow, because he came from the home town, Jared might have been wearing stripes at San Quentin for the next five or ten years." \*

"Yes, and when we got back," added Tubby, "Rob went to see Hiram Applegate, the farmer Jared calls his father, and who used to be as mean as sour apple pie to us fellows in the old days. He just told Hiram that we had met Jared out there, and he seemed to be in good health. Fact is, he tried to give him the impression that Jared was getting on pretty well and had reformed. Jared did promise us that he'd give up his mean habits; but between you and me and the lamp-post none of us had the least bit of faith in what he said. Somehow, you can't believe some people."

---

\*See "The Boy Scouts at the Panama-Pacific Exposition."

"There's somebody coming from town right now, and it strikes me I ought to know that long swinging stride," interrupted Merritt.

"It's our Rob, all right," said Tubby, and any one hearing him speak in such a satisfied tone would understand that these fellows were unusually fond of the boy they all looked up to as leader.

"Just as Sid Jeffords was saying only yesterday," Andy observed, "most fellows who had been through as many exciting times as Rob Blake would feel above the common herd, and perhaps some of us might, too; but Rob is just the same splendid chap we've always known, never boasting of what he's seen and done, always ready to take the biggest share of the burden on his shoulders, and when you're in pain he's just as tender as your own mother could be."

"No wonder all the boys in Hampton Troop just worship Rob!" exclaimed Merritt, who in fact was the particular chum of the scout leader, if any one could aspire to that distinction above the others. "But we'd better let up on all that stuff. If there's anything Rob hates it is to suspect that some of us were talking about him and sounding his praises. He's as humble as he is

great, and that's the limit of a boy's vocabulary when speaking of a chum."

"Look at him starting to run now!" called out Tubby, evincing a little excitement. "I wonder if there's anything new in the wind? You remember Rob was expecting a letter from the head of that big corporation in San Francisco. Mebbe they've taken on some new wonderful invention of Hiram's, and he's written to tell Rob the glorious news."

"Oh! your imagination is getting away with you, Tubby," objected Merritt. "The chances are Rob finds himself a few seconds behind the time he promised to meet us here, for the mail may have been delayed a bit; and you know how he hates to miss being punctual. Fact is, he's got the whole of us toeing the mark that way."

"Well, we'll soon know," replied Tubby. "Here he comes on the run. Yes, and he's got a letter of some kind in his hand, too, you can see."

They awaited the arrival of Rob with growing interest. By now both the others could also see that the face of the leader of the Eagle Patrol was flushed, not only from his little run along the road but apparently from some inward cause as well.

A minute later and Rob Blake drew up alongside his three chums, who, still perched upon the topmost rail of the fence, waited for him to speak.

Rob was a resolute looking young fellow. Any one capable of reading boy character would have delighted in searching his face, and noting the flash of his eye, the firm jaws, and the way in which that sunny smile broke over his countenance at times. Indeed, one would not have to be much of a prophet to understand that this lad had been highly favored by Nature, and that it was plainly his destiny to always play the part of a leader among his fellows.

He was breathing a little strenuously on account of his recent haste, but the first thing Rob did was to glance from one face to another of the three confronting him, and nod each time.

"Well, the strangest thing that ever happened, I reckon, has just come about," he told them, which mysterious words simply added to their curiosity.

Merritt sprang down from the fence with the agility of an athlete, Andy followed suit in a more deliberate fashion, while Tubby simply bowled over, and landed in a heap, sprawled out like a frog. Luckily, he had taken the precau-



tion to close his knife and deposit it in his trousers pocket, else he might have injured himself by his clumsy upset.

"Tell us about it then, Rob!" begged Andy, naturally enough. "I see you got your letter all right. What has Mr. Curley to say this time? Has Hiram done it again, and do they want to pay him a *million* this time for some wonderful invention he's figured out?"

Rob laughed. By now he was in a fit condition to talk, which had doubtless been his main object in holding back. He was never anything of a tease.

"The letter I got wasn't from the manager of the Golden Gate Aviation Company at all, you see," he went on to say, holding the missive up in front of them. "It bears the postmark of Washington and over in this corner is printed a modest little return line telling that it came from one of the big departments down at the National Capital. In fact, boys, it is from the Secret Service!"

Every one of the three boys evinced the most intense interest. This was really not the first time Rob Blake had had dealings with the authorities at Washington, as those who have read the

previous stories in this Series well know. As on the other occasion this connection had led to exciting events for some of the members of the Eagle Patrol, so now wonderful possibilities at once began to loom up on the horizon as Merritt, Andy and Tubby stood and stared at Rob.

"This letter," continued the patrol leader, "is from a Mr. Wainwright, who is an old friend of my folks, and has visited here several times. Yes, I guess he knows about some of the many things that have happened to us in the past, which is one reason he turns to us now. I'm going to read his letter to you first. It speaks for itself. So listen, all of you."

## CHAPTER II.

## THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURE.

"First of all," Rob went on to say, "I want you to notice that he enclosed this sealed envelope in his letter. It is marked 'To be Opened only after accepting my Commission, and Starting on the Way!'"

"Whee! that sounds mighty interesting, Rob!" ejaculated Merritt.

"I only hope I'm going to be in on this thing, that's all," exclaimed Andy.

Tubby only puffed and stared and held his breath by turns, though doubtless he was also hoping the same thing that the last speaker expressed; but then, Rob would never be taking all of them into his confidence in this fashion unless he intended that they should share his good fortune.

"The letter follows," continued Rob, "and here it is. I'll read it all first, and then you can make any remarks you choose.

“MY DEAR ROB—It is a long time since I have seen you, but depend on it none of your recent activities have been allowed to escape me. Your mother promised to keep me fully informed, and she is a woman of her word. I am writing you now upon a serious matter of business. If there seems to be a little element of mystery connected with this communication, please do not think it is done because I wish you to make a promise blindly, but that I consider it wise to have you start under sealed orders, if you can see your way clear to help us out again.

“An occasion has arisen whereby a clever Boy Scout can prove to be of considerable service to our people here. I do not enter into full particulars, reserving them for the sealed packet enclosed with this. If you cannot gain permission from your folks to undertake the duty, it is best that no one know its nature, and we shall have to turn elsewhere.

“Here, then, is an outline of what I ask of you. Try and get a couple of those clever chums of yours to accompany you on a little trip into the woods. It should not take you more than a week at the most, I imagine, when either success or failure will result, and you can return home again. You could make out to be camping as scouts delight to do, which would lull any suspicion to rest.

“There is no particular danger about the mission I am endeavoring to have you undertake, knowing from past experiences that you are well fitted to succeed in it, if any one

can. Only, as I said before, it happens that a Boy Scout wearing the khaki is more likely to accomplish the results we seek than a dozen of our best officers. Just how this happens you will learn if you have occasion to break the seal of the enclosed packet two hours after you leave home.

“Now, this is the programme marked out for you to pursue. Be sure to let those in authority over you and your friends read this letter. I give my word of honor that there need be no particular anxiety arise because of your mission, for you are not expected to trail and capture any desperate criminal. Once you gain permission and go forth, ready for a week’s stay in the wilds, head *due north* from Hampton, and two hours later break the seal so as to understand what lies ahead of you.

“I regret that I cannot be more explicit in this letter, but your mother has sufficient faith in me as an old friend to know that I would not willingly ask you to undertake any really perilous mission. We need you, Rob, as you will comprehend when you read the particulars enclosed. If all is well wire me here that you will undertake my little but very important task; and after that I shall await good news from you, because your past successes seem to tell me my faith will not be misplaced. Remember me to your good mother, and hoping to have a favorable message by wire, I remain, Faithfully yours,

“ALEXANDER WAINWRIGHT.’”



When Rob stopped reading he found a half circle of flushed faces confronting him.

"Do you mean that you're going to ask the three of us to go along on this wonderfully mysterious trip, Rob?" gasped Tubby Hopkins, rubbing his chubby hands over each other as he often did when half dazed.

"I haven't had much time to figure it all out," explained the other. "You see, I only got the letter a short time ago. But I'm asking you all, and if one has to fall out because his folks refuse to give permission, why that would leave me two good chums. But if every one can go, four mightn't be too many."

Merritt gravely insisted on shaking hands with the patrol leader. The others had to follow suit in just as solemn a manner.

"That's just the way things seem to come about," the corporal went on to assert. "When it looks like dull times ahead, all of a sudden something bobs up, and we're off! And, Rob, right now I think you can count on me going along. Why, I wouldn't miss this chance for anything."

"Me, too!" cried Andy, while Tubby rounded

up his plump shoulders, and made a face that stood for eager desire, as he hastened to say:

"Oh! don't I hope, Rob, you can convince my mother I really need another little turn in the open before school takes up. Two weeks more and it's that same old round of drudgery again, lessons and lessons till you can't think. Promise me, Rob, won't you, that you'll see her personally, and she'll believe anything you say, because she knows you'd never yarn?"

"Oh! I'll have to visit every one of your homes, I reckon," asserted the patrol leader, "and read this queer letter from Mr. Wainwright. You see he makes it as strong as he can that so far as he can see there's no great danger attending this job he's offering us. Besides, he says it needs to be a scout in khaki, who can carry his plan to success; just why, for the life of me, I can't guess."

"Do we go out to visit Hiram now, Rob?" demanded Tubby.

"Huh! for one," Andy hastened to say, "seems like my mind has undergone a tremendous change during the last few minutes. I was feeling a bit curious to see what that inventor-chum of ours had been doing of late; but say, I move we turn

back right now, and begin to work the wires so as to get the consent of our folks to our having one last hike into the woods of old Long Island before school takes up."

"Second the motion, Andy!" gurgled Tubby, quickly.

"My way of thinking, too," added Merritt.

Rob, upon seeing that they had indeed lost all interest in Hiram and his ingenious inventions, smiled and nodded his head.

"I must say I'm glad to find you so interested in the new prospect, fellows," he told them. "I only hope no hitch occurs to keep any one of you at home. Something seems to tell me this queer business will open a lot of new and interesting adventures such as scouts dearly love to meet with."

"It certainly begins to look that way, Rob," admitted Merritt. "First of all there's the mystery of the sealed orders under which we're expected to make our start. Why, that alone has got me quivering with curiosity. I can't begin to guess whatever Mr. Wainwright wants us to do, and why a scout would be better fitted to carry out his work than any one of his shrewd revenue officers."

Accordingly they left the crossroads and forgot all about the hard-working Hiram and his wonderful inventions, though until then they had evinced the greatest of interest in what he was doing.

The rest of that afternoon those four boys busied themselves in seeking out their several parents and working industriously to gain their consent toward allowing the scout of the family to go forth upon another hike. Rob had no difficulty at all. His people had the utmost faith in his ability to take care of himself and accomplish whatever he set out to attempt. Besides, Mr. Wainwright being a warm friend of the family, great confidence was felt in his avowal that there need not be any particular danger attached to the mission; also that he was depending on Rob very much to carry it to success.

Merritt, too, had little difficulty in convincing his father that it was within the duties of a loyal scout to serve the Government at Washington when called upon. Besides, the boy had missed a good time when some of his chums went West, and Mr. Crawford did not have the heart to say no.

Andy Bowles also received the coveted permis-





which are now almost entirely lost. The only one which remains is the one which is now in the possession of the British Museum.

The first of these is the one which is now in the possession of the British Museum. It is a very fine specimen of the work, and is in the best of preservation. It is a very fine specimen of the work, and is in the best of preservation.

## CHAPTER III.

## OPENING THE SEALED PACKET.

Rob had thought it best to keep their new venture a dead secret from all the other fellows of Hampton Troop. He did this not because he could not trust them, but on account of the fact that it would be utterly impossible for him to invite another chum to accompany him. Mr. Wainwright had mentioned taking a couple along, and now that he was going to have the company of three of his best friends, Rob considered he had gone to the limit.

Then again, he knew that a secret can be better kept when limited to a fewer number. All of their folks had been bound to absolute secrecy when told about the letter sent by the influential gentleman at Washington. Rob realized that, when undertaking any sort of business connected with the Secret Service, it was a matter of principle to refrain from spreading the news broadcast. Such work as those agents usually find to do is better carried to success through silence and

steady application, rather than with a hurrah and much noise.

They managed to get away from town without meeting any of the boys, which Rob considered very good luck. If it became known in a day or so that they had gone off, nothing was likely to be done about it, for the scouts had not as yet started to have their regular meetings in the hall above the bank, though the gymnasium was in general use on certain days of the week.

"Tubby, you look like a traveling tinker, with that load on your back," Merritt was saying, after they had left the town well in the rear, and were making toward the north along the road that ran in that direction.

"I suppose I do," agreed the other, with a grin, "but long ago I learned that it isn't what you *seem* to be that counts when on a hike. What matters is what you've been thoughtful enough to fetch along. Yes, every pan and platter, as well as the old coffeepot that I'm lugging along with me, is endeared with heaps of delightful memories. Some of the same have gone forth with us from the time we made our first hike into the woods, when the Eagle Patrol was organized. Whee! what heaps of bully things they've held."

He licked his lips at the very thought, although breakfast could not have been more than an hour back, for the August day was still very young. But then those who are acquainted with the fat scout need not be told that he was always hungry, being possessed of an enormous appetite, with which he was continually wrestling, in the hope that by Spartan abstinence he might, by degrees, diminish some of his ample girth about the waist.

"You had better let me relieve you of a few things, 'Tubby," remarked the ever obliging Andy. "Since you fetched 'em along, why we've got to tote them. It would be a shame to have you founder so early in the day, with that load on your poor back."

"Bless you, Andy, you're the best-hearted fellow in seven counties," affirmed the other. "It isn't the weight of the things so much as the warmth of the day that might tucker me out. I c'n feel the perspiration trickling down to my shoe-tops right now. While we're about it, Rob, why not stop at this spring and freshen up a bit."

"Many a time I've done that at this hole!" declared Rob, as he willingly complied with the request.

"Two hours he said, didn't he, Rob?" asked

Andy, after he drank his fill by means of the rusty tin-cup that was kept at the wayside spring.

"Yes, that was the time limit mentioned," agreed the scout leader.

"And we've been on the way almost an hour as it is," added Tubby, mopping his rosy face with a big red bandanna handkerchief that he often liked to tie about his neck, cowboy style.

"If we chose," pursued the chuckling Andy, "we might lay around here and rest up till the whole two hours had expired, when we'd be at liberty to break the packet open, and read the orders we're to run this campaign under."

"There's nothing to hinder our sitting here a while," admitted Rob, "but I had about made up my mind to get as far as Tatum's before breaking the seal. That is something like half an hour's walk from here, I should say."

"All right, Rob, just as you say," returned Andy, promptly, for like all the other members of the Eagle Patrol he was always ready to accept the will of Rob as law.

"I was just thinking," mused Tubby, who sometimes had these fits come over him, "what a queer feeling it gives a fellow to realize that he's actu-



ally undertaking to do something for Uncle Sam's Secret Service. It goes to show what a lot of good people are beginning to think of the scouts as an organization. Why, this sealed order business has got me guessing to the limit. What under the sun can it all mean?"

"Better stop worrying over it, Tubby," advised Andy, "or first thing you know you'll be reduced to skin and bone. A fine sight you would be for the folks at home if you came back so lean they'd never know you."

"Huh! small danger of that," grunted the other, as he rubbed a hand softly up and down his stomach. "Even if our grub gives out I'm a pretty good forager, you understand."

They chatted on various topics as they lingered by the cool spring, though naturally most of the talk concerned the object of their present undertaking, which was so delightfully tied up in mystery.

Eventually, Rob, remarking that they would do well to make another start so as to reach Tatum's place by the time the two-hour limit had expired, got upon his feet. The rest followed suit, though Tubby must have another long drink before ready to quit the enticing shady spot where

the cluster of dwarf oaks hung over that wayside spring.

So the march was resumed. They could no longer see anything of the home town, though Long Island, particularly the South Shore, is not noted for its hills. Nevertheless, there was more or less rising ground, and the trees, while not of any great size, were thick enough to hide objects a mile or two away.

The whistle of a train on the railroad reached their ears plainly enough, proving that, after all, they were still close upon the borders of civilization.

They made no effort to hasten, and Tubby expressed himself as thankful for the consideration shown him. It was getting warmer as the sun mounted toward the zenith, and when a fellow has to carry a pretty hefty load of flesh, besides an enormous amount of luggage, he must feel as though pretty nearly "wilted" at times.

"Rob, it's almost two hours since we left home," warned Andy, who carried one of those little reliable watches that can be purchased for a dollar in these modern days, and are just the thing for scouts to carry, unless they wish to depend entirely upon their scout education along the line

of being able to tell the time of day or night by the heavenly bodies.

"Well, I expect to bring up at Tatum's place inside of ten minutes," rejoined the patrol leader. "We'll not bother stopping until we get there."

"Who is Tatum, by the way?" asked Tubby. "I seem to know the name, but just can't place the person."

"Why, some of us boys went out last fall and helped save his barns from being burned when those bush fires spread around, with the wind from the ocean whipping them along," explained Rob. "Ever since then Mrs. Tatum has had a soft spot in her heart for anybody that wears the khaki. Once, you may remember, she sent us down a great big bag of crullers like they make up in New England where she came from."

"Oh! of course, I remember now, even if I wasn't one of those who helped keep the fire away from their place!" exclaimed Tubby. "But I did eat my share of those crullers. They were all right, too."

"When our Tubby pronounces anything in the way of grub gilt-edged," remarked Merritt, gravely, "you can bet your bottom dollar it's above par every time. He's a boss judge along those

lines. But, look ahead, fellows, seems to me we must be about there, for that's a barn roof I see rising above those scrub oaks yonder."

"Listen!" said Rob. "We might drop down where we are, and proceed to open the sealed packet, so as to have a chance to talk things over before we stop in to say 'howdy'edo' to the Tatum's. Does that strike you all about the right thing to do?"

He received an immediate and unanimous verdict in answer to his question.

"Let's find a good place to rest in the shade," he then proposed. "We may want to stay here to discuss the matter for some little time, and might as well be comfortable."

"You've got a level head on your shoulders, Rob, my friend," panted Tubby. "For one I believe in taking things as easy as one can—except when you just have to tote a lot of traps on your back, or go without the ordinary comforts of camp life."

When they had settled on the spot alongside the road that offered the best inducements in the way of seats and nice shade as well, Tubby managed to slip off his pack amidst more or less jangling and noise.

"You've got something to learn yet, Tubby," remarked Merritt, with a frown as of displeasure at the loud racket. "Every sound should be muffled, and those tinpans never ought to be allowed to strike against each other. Suppose these woods were full of hostile Indians, how long do you suppose it would be before they came crawling around us if you kept on banging that coffee-pot against the frying-pan?"

Tubby only grinned in his good-natured way, and shook his head. He did not see the sense of borrowing useless trouble; there were no Indians on Long Island in these modern days, he knew very well, saving a few descendants of the original tribes, who sometimes came to trade in Hampton, and they really knew less about woodcraft than most of the scouts.

"When the time is ripe to exercise caution I can do my little bit nearly as well as the next fellow," he told Merritt. "Say, what's the use of always imagining trouble? I used to see things in the dark when I was a kid, and they put me in my little bed. As I grew older I found out there wasn't any bugaboo at all, and ever since then I've tried to keep my imagination under proper control. But here we are all ready to watch our



leader break the seal and read the instructions that are going to govern our future movements."

"Well said, Tubby," commented Andy, fixing himself as best the character of the ground admitted, "and here's hoping none of us will be a whit disappointed when we learn what's in the wind."

Rob calmly broke the seal of the little packet, and took out the contents, which proved to be a sheet of paper with more or less typewriting on it.

## CHAPTER IV.

## A STRANGE COMMISSION.

"Must be mighty interesting, judging from the way Rob's devouring it," commented Tubby, presently, for the scout leader had naturally enough taken advantage of his prerogative to glance over the contents of the sealed packet, before starting to explain their nature to his chums.

Rob looked rather grave as he finished.

"Well, of all the queer things that could happen this certainly takes the cake," they heard him say, half to himself. This only added fuel to the flame of curiosity.

"Please open up and elucidate, Rob!" begged Tubby, who could on occasion make use of quite classical language, though as a rule he preferred to talk simply after the fashion of boys in general.

"Listen!" said Rob, impressively. "Here is what Mr. Wainwright has to say in the inside letter. The first thing that strikes me is that he

was a little afraid some of our good folks at home might have objected to our coming if they knew in the start that we were expected to search for a crazy man!"

"Great governor! what's that you say, Rob?" gasped Merritt, looking aghast.

"A loony, is it, we're expected to chase after?" grunted Tubby. "Well, I like that now! How under the sun does it come that your Mr. Wainwright couldn't send a posse of his brave and nervy revenue men to hunt the poor chap down? What makes him think Boy Scouts could accomplish the job better than any grown-ups? Tell us that, won't you, Rob?"

"Oh! there is a reason, all right," the leader hastily informed him, "and a good one. When you hear the facts you may not think it looks so odd after all. In the first place, Mr. Wainwright would never ask such a favor of us if he didn't mean every word he said. Scouts can do something in this case that probably no one else might manage successfully."

"Whew! that's talking some, I must say!" declared Andy, perhaps unconsciously feeling highly flattered, for it might have been noticed that he drew himself up a little proudly; while even

Tubby, usually only after the material things of life, took on a look of satisfaction.

"It's getting these days," remarked Merritt, sagely, "that the scouts are being called on to attempt all sorts of remarkable stunts. Why, never a week passes but in the paper I read about some things they're expected to do. Let a child or a weak-minded person get lost in the woods or the hills, and the first thing people say is 'arrange with the scouts to go out and currycomb the hills; they'll find him if anybody can!' If a town is in bad shape and needs cleaning up the scouts are looked to by the women to take the lead. They are called on to help put out forest fires and brush burning, just as we did when this place up the rise was threatened not so long ago. In fact, everywhere in the whole United States the Boy Scouts have come to be depended on when trouble rises."

"Hooray! that's talking some, Merritt!" exclaimed Tubby. "I take off my hat to those sentiments every time. The scouts and the flag forever; one and indivisible! But when they expect us to hunt for a crazy man it seems to be about the limit. Please go on and tell us what it means, Rob."

"I'm ready to, Tubby, but you fellows, having got the floor, seem bent on holding it. Now, this man's name is Martin Carmody. He was a clever fellow, and employed in the Treasury Department in Washington, where he had to do with the engraved plates which our bank-notes are printed from. Mr. Wainwright doesn't go into particulars as to just how Carmody went insane, but he says the man fancies he has bitter enemies among the officials. He suddenly disappeared. Then it was discovered that he had taken with him certain plates, the value of which could hardly be computed in dollars."

"Cracky! now I'm beginning to see light!" muttered Merritt, and then closed up like a clam for fear lest he cause the other to stop in the midst of his interesting explanations that fairly entranced them all.

"The whole Secret Service Department was put in motion in order to locate the demented man. They had just learned that he came up here, and was hiding in the woods of Long Island not twenty miles from Hampton when a letter was received bearing his signature, in which he told them that if a single revenue officer came near his hiding-place, he had fixed it so that the pre-



cious plates would be utterly destroyed. His capture, then, would be but an empty victory."

"I've always read that a crazy person can be mighty crafty, and now I believe it," ventured Andy, when Rob stopped for breath.

"Martin Carmody certainly had them guessing when he sent that letter," Tubby was heard to mutter as he expectantly eyed the scout leader.

"Now," Rob went on to say, earnestly, "here is where we come in. Mr. Wainwright says they know enough about this man to feel sure that he will keep his threat. It is mostly to recover those priceless plates that they are searching for him. If Carmody has them hidden he might let the secret die with him. There appeared to be just one loop-hole, and this is what Mr. Wainwright figured out:

"It seems that they learned something about Carmody's former life. He has been a widower for many years, a sort of moody man in the office, but exceedingly smart. One gentleman who had found a chance to visit Carmody at his home told them he had had just one child, a bright boy of about thirteen, named Adolf, whom he fairly worshipped, and that the lad belonged to the

scouts, for he was always seen in his khaki uniform, with corporal marks on the sleeve.

“In the course of their investigations it was discovered that a short time ago this boy was accidentally drowned, though his body had never been recovered. The moody man never told his great sorrow, but kept at his work, nursing his wound. Then he began to have what Mr. Wainwright calls hallucinations—that is, he came to believe some of the people in the Department were his enemies, bent on persecuting him. So, when he suddenly fled and carried off the most precious plates in the vaults, it was with the idea of having revenge upon those imaginary enemies for the apparent wrongs they had done him.

“The idea Mr. Wainwright conjured is this. The sight of a khaki uniform on a boy has a wonderful influence on Martin Carmody. This he knows from a number of recent instances where he was seen to follow boys who belonged to the scouts, as though they might have some sort of invisible connection with his lost son. Mr. Wainwright fully believes that as scouts we might easily become friends with this fugitive and win his confidence, so that by making use of a little artful diplomacy, we could, in the end, recover

those plates. That's the whole thing in a nutshell. Now, what do you think of it, boys?"

"If you're asking me for my opinion, Rob," spoke up Merritt, "I want to say that it strikes me as a most daring and original scheme. There's going to be a spice of danger connected with it. Nobody can ever tell what a crazy man'll do. I reckon we ought to be able to manage him. I fully believe you can twist him around your finger, given half a chance. It's a wonderful scheme, and if Mr. Wainwright got the same up he deserves a whole lot of credit. Why, a scout could hardly have done any better."

"Count me in along the same lines, Rob," added Andy.

Tubby was seen to be shaking his head back and forth.

"Sure, it's one of the brightest schemes I ever heard about," he went on to say, "but all the same I don't feel very much like taking a hand in running a poor, demented man down, and handing him over to the Government to be punished. Success, if purchased at such a price, would make me feel guilty every time I chanced to think of Martin Carmody in prison. The sight of a crazy person would set me to shivering."

"Oh, make your mind easy about that part of it, Tubby," Rob hastened to say reassuringly. "Mr. Wainwright plainly says in this second communication that, knowing Carmody to be out of his mind, the Government has not the least intention of punishing the poor fellow. All they are anxious to do is to recover the stolen plates, though perhaps he ought to be put in confinement if he turns out incurably insane."

Tubby looked relieved.

"In that case, Rob," he said, pompously, "the load is taken off my mind, and I can promise you I'll do everything in my power to carry out the wishes of the Department. That makes it unanimous, so let's go ahead and talk over some plan of campaign."

Once the subject was started it seemed as though a dozen ideas were immediately forthcoming. Every fellow had at least a couple of plans in the beginning, with still others cropping up as fast as these were riddled and cast aside.

Mr. Wainwright had given a few particulars at the close of his letter of instruction telling them just where it was believed Carmody was hiding. It would be necessary for them to make camp somewhere in that vicinity, trusting to their scout

education, seconded by their natural sagacity, to come upon the man after he had been attracted by their khaki uniforms.

Really, the more they discussed the situation, the greater became their interest. Nothing they had ever experienced before could be set down in the same class as the present undertaking. There was a certain sense of danger hovering over it, too, that helped make the task more attractive. These boys, like most healthy lads, with red blood in their veins, liked a touch of peril in their adventures.

In the end it was determined that, to begin with, their only plan was to proceed to the vicinity of his hiding-place and make camp, doing things in such a breezy way that their coming would surely be known to the fugitive. The sight of the khaki must do the rest in-so-far as holding his interest. Rob could be trusted to handle the situation once they got in touch with Carmody.

Tubby was beginning to fuss around among his various articles as though desirous of making a fresh start; seeing which, and knowing the signs of old, Andy proceeded to take him to task.

“No use making all that fuss with the coffee-pot and the frying-pan, Tubby. It isn’t near time



to stop and cook anything. A whole hour before noon comes, and then some. If you're nearly starved, munch on some crackers. We've figured on only three regular meals a day on this trip, and we'll have to live up to regulations."

"Oh!" said Tubby, smiling sweetly, "I was only thinking that perhaps we might take a notion to hold over at Mr. Tatum's farm, especially if we happened to get a whiff of dinner cooking when we walked up the hill yonder. Let me tell you some of these farmers' wives can set the finest tables ever. Why, I've just seen 'em *groaning* under the weight of good things piled up. Rob, what do you say about my scheme?"

Rob was just about to make some sort of humorous answer when, without warning, there came a series of loud shouts and shrieks. The scouts had no trouble about locating them, and their eyes instantly turned toward the spot where the roof of a farm building could be seen above a patch of low trees crowning the nearby elevation.

"Something's happened up at Tatums!" yelled Tubby, excitedly.

A man was shouting, several women shrieking, dogs barking, a donkey braying, and altogether

it did seem as though something quite out of the usual was taking place at the farm.

"Let's make a break for up there!" cried Rob, at the same moment starting forth, forgetting all about the packs that still lay on the ground.

"Oh! look!" cried Tubby, lagging in the rear, "there's a little dinky car coming whooping down the grade, and something must have broken about the steering gear. It wobbles like everything all the while going faster and faster! Give him the whole road, fellows, and take care he doesn't scoop you up! Whee! see him coming like mad, will you?"

## CHAPTER V.

## RESCUED FROM THE BOG.

All that Tubby had called out so excitedly seemed to be true. The descending car was gaining in speed as it approached the spot where the four scouts stood, and consequently they made haste to scramble upon the nearby fence so as to give the erratic vehicle the full width of the road.

The so-called hill was not very steep, for on the South Shore sandy beaches as a rule prevail, though along the Sound quite respectable elevations are to be found. Nevertheless, the descent was enough to be called a "hill," and when a car takes over the running from the driver, a down-grade of any account is apt to cause something to happen.

It fairly whizzed past the scouts. They could see that a single man crouched back of the useless wheel, which, however, he was clutching desperately, as though still relying on the usual means of steering, regardless of the fact that it had failed him.

"The sharp bend below!" gasped Andy, even as the runaway car flew by.

All of them recalled, as Andy spoke, the sudden turn the road took just at the base of the low hill. A dextrous pilot, with a car well controlled, might manage to make the turn without going over, but there could be no hope whatever in the case of such a wildly running machine.

There must follow an upset, with the car turning turtle, and either throwing him far beyond, or else pinning him underneath, as so often happens in an accident of this sort.

As they anticipated, so it came to pass. The boys held their breath as they followed, with their eyes, the erratic course of the little runabout, saw it reach the bend, and then, even as it vanished from their sight, it seemed to tilt over.

Then came a loud crash, and after that, silence—in so far as any evidence of an engine running was concerned, though the racket from above still continued to some extent.

Rob again started to run, but now, instead of heading up the rise he went down toward the bottom. No matter what was happening up at Tatum's, the disaster that had befallen the unknown man in the runaway car was so plain that

it seemed as though their attention should first of all be directed in that quarter.

They were not far above the base of the hill, and as Rob, Merritt and Andy were good runners, they reached the turn in less than a minute. Even Tubby, coming down-grade under full sail, managed to keep close at the heels of his chums. The fat scout was capable of "rising to an occasion," as he often proudly explained, and sometimes astonished his comrades on the ball field, or in the woods when on a hike.

No sooner had they turned the bend than they saw what had happened. On the far side of the road lay a sort of bog. Rob had even remarked when passing before that from the signs he imagined several accidents had taken place at the sharp curve, and that Nature had kindly placed a soft morass there just to softly receive those whose haste in making the descent pushed them into trouble.

The first thing they saw was the little runabout. It had turned over, and was partly buried in the mud of the bog, doubtless pretty well smashed. If the unfortunate driver had been crushed under his car his plight was indeed desperate. This was the thought that caused Rob to

hasten his steps after sighting the luckless run-about.

"Rob, what can we do to help him?" cried Merritt, staring at the ooze close to the car. "It may be like a quicksand, and suck us down if we get caught in it."

"I see him!" cried Andy.

"Whereabouts?" demanded the patrol leader, for it happened that thus far he had not himself been able to glimpse the late driver of the little car.

"Away beyond, where that big bunch of weeds crops up!" Andy hastened to cry, at the same time pointing wildly.

"You're right, Andy," agreed Rob, "it surely is the man, and he must have been thrown all of that distance when his car whirled around the bend, and went over into the bog."

"Great luck that," added Merritt, "to be tossed right on to a bunch of weeds. If he had gone five feet either way he would have struck a tree and had his brains knocked out, or else been buried in the soft mud."

"But, Rob, how in the wide world are we going to get him out?" asked Tubby, helplessly.

"I want Merritt to come with me," Rob told



them quickly. "I reckon we can find a path out into the bog by following that line of weeds. You other fellows stand by ready to help us if we should get into trouble. This way, Merritt."

As usual, Rob was not the one to let the grass grow under his feet when there was need of immediate haste, though at other times he could be both cool and deliberate. That was where his value as a scout came in, for quick thinking, as well as prompt action, always proves a good asset in emergencies.

His practiced eye had noted that the line of weeds seemed to run all the way out to where the form of the driver of the wrecked car lay; and knowing more or less about the peculiarities of bogs in general as found on Long Island, Rob was able to fashion his plans accordingly.

He never allowed those under him to take the lead when there was a spice of danger involved. So, when the security of the road was left behind and they started to advance over the surface of the treacherous morass, Rob was in front, nor did Merritt think to question his right to leadership.

Just as the scout master had already settled in his mind, it proved that where the line of weeds

grew there was a narrow ledge of firm ground upon which nimble-footed lads could readily make their way.

Tubby and Andy, left on the road, watched their slow progress anxiously, as though not sure but that some terrible calamity might at any second overwhelm their comrades. In times gone by they had all been through more or less experience with the treacherous quicksands as well as oozy swamps, and the perils that lurk in such places were well known to both scouts.

Andy had taken note of a trailing wild grapevine that twisted its way up a neighboring tree, and he wondered how long it would take him to cut this free from its anchorage, in case a rope were urgently needed. Possessed of a sudden notion of preparedness the boy even took out his knife and started to frantically hack at the base of the vine. If it were needed at all, the necessity would arise suddenly, and Andy wanted to be ready to respond.

Tubby, on his part, simply stood there, holding on to a shrub that hung over the edge of the bog, his round eyes glued on the forms of the two boys who were making their way out to where the motionless chauffeur lay. Tubby was ar-

dently hoping no evil would befall them in the undertaking they were engaged in; but had such a thing really happened, he was prepared to lend a helping hand as best he might.

Meanwhile, Rob and his comrade were nearing the spot where the unlucky driver of the wrecked runabout lay huddled up across the patch of weeds. Just as Merritt had said before, the man was in great luck to have been tossed there when on either side lay perils that might have ended his career—tree-trunks able to break his back in case of a collision, or ooze that would have smothered him had he been cast headlong into its soft grip.

“We’re going to reach him all right!” called out Rob, who was picking his way along; not that he cared so much whether his leggings were splashed with the mud as that a slip might bring a host of troubles in its train.

“Wonder if he’s still alive,” ventured Merritt, for thus far he had not been able to detect a sign about the man to indicate that he breathed, but Rob’s reply set all anxiety at rest.

“Yes, I saw him move,” Rob announced, “though the chances are he’s in a bad way. He plunged head-first into that clump, you see, and

must have got a nasty crack. But we'll soon know."

By the time he spoke the last words he was leaning over the motionless figure. A quick examination sufficed to tell him that the man was probably only in a swoon caused by his recent fright, also by the concussion when he was brought up so suddenly in the midst of the weed patch in the bog.

"Let's see if we can get him ashore, Merritt," suggested the scout leader. "You take his heels and go ahead, while I handle his shoulders from the rear. Be careful of your steps, and follow the track we made in coming out here!"

Again did their experience prove valuable to the two scouts. They had long ago learned just how to work under conditions like these. Tubby shouted encouragingly to them from time to time as they slowly made their way along. The fellow who is not in the game can always see points that escape those actively employed. Every boy has known of instances when he could readily pick out a move, when watching two chums play checkers or chess, that promised a speedy victory.

As Merritt was a careful fellow, and not given to rashness, no accident marred their way back to

solid ground. Andy had been working feverishly all this while, and managed to hack the base of the wild grape-vine free from its root. He also succeeded in untangling its upper folds from their grip on the tree, and now trailed the entire vine after him as he hastened to meet Rob and Merritt when they landed.

"Oh! is he dead?" asked Tubby in quite an awed voice, as he looked uneasily at the mud-splashed face of the unknown person, where he could also see traces of red, for the twigs or branches had made slight gashes in his skin when he was hurled so violently through space.

"No danger of that, I expect," Rob told him, consolingly. He knew what a tender heart Tubby Hopkins had. "Here, help us up out of this awful place, boys."

Willing hands were immediately outstretched to give what assistance was necessary; and in this way the driver of the runabout was brought to the road.

"Here's a place where the moss lies heavy and soft, Rob," said Andy, whose eyes seemed capable of seeing many things that were apparently hidden from Tubby.

Accordingly, they laid the man down on that

bed of green moss. Rob instantly dropped on his knees and commenced looking the unconscious driver over. A superficial examination would be enough to tell him if any bones had been broken, which was the main object of Rob's immediate concern.

"Seems to be all right, though I wouldn't be surprised if he had a broken collarbone, because he struck heavily," was what he announced as the others bent over to catch his verdict.

"Oh! if that's all, he got off pretty lucky!" Andy asserted. "I had my collarbone broken once, and it wasn't so *very* bad, only kept me with a stiff neck for a time. Rob, I do believe he's beginning to come to."

"Get me a little cold water if you can, Andy," remarked the leader, and having before this located a pool close by, Andy speedily brought back some of the liquid, using his campaign hat in lieu of any better receptacle.

Rob proceeded to sprinkle a little water in the man's mud-splashed face. He detected a flutter of the eyelids as soon as the first drops fell upon the other's forehead. That told him consciousness was about to return.

Indeed, shortly afterwards he saw the man's



eyes open and caught the look of wonder that filled them. 'The fellow did not understand what had happened to him, or who these boys in khaki might be.

Rob was just about to question him when he heard the hasty patter of heavy boots, and then came a panting voice calling out beseechingly:

"Don't let that man get away, for he's a thief, and has robbed my house!" Looking up Rob saw, as he had suspected, that the excited speaker was Mr. Tatum, the farmer whose house stood at the brow of the low hill beyond.

## CHAPTER VI.

## FOR SERVICES RENDERED.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Tatum!" called out Merritt.

"Why, how's this—Boy Scouts, and surely I ought to know several of these faces. Rob Blake and Merritt Crawford, I'm glad to see you again. Once more you've happened along just in time to do me a good turn."

The farmer was a middle-aged man, and like most of his type looked as though he had worked hard since boyhood to accumulate the competence he might then be enjoying. Mr. Tatum was called a rich man, as Long Island truck-growers go, in that he owned various pieces of ground of more or less value around Hampton, and in the neighborhood of Riverhead, the county seat on Peconic Bay.

He shook hands with the two scouts, and insisted on greeting both Andy and Tubby also. Evidently past experience had taught Farmer Tatum that those who wear the khaki are likely to be fellows worth knowing. Once upon a time,

not so very long since—for it was only the previous fall—he might have suffered grievous loss on account of persistent brush fires driven by a furious wind from the ocean, only for the prompt assistance furnished by Rob and some of his chums, who were in camp near by.

After shaking hands, the farmer once more turned his attention to the rapidly reviving driver of the little old runabout that had met with such bad luck, and was now lying upside down abandoned in the muck.

“Have you searched him yet, Rob?” he asked, anxiously.

“Why, no. We didn’t know there was any need,” the other replied. “Did I understand you to say he had stolen something from you, Mr. Tatum?”

“He held us all up, and got away with my roll,” the tiller of the sandy soil hastened to reply. “There was just a thousand dollars in the lot, for I sold a farm yesterday, and had the first payment made on it. I meant to drive over to Riverhead in the morning, having some law business there, and thought the money safe enough in my pocket. But he must have known about it, because he made me hand it out.”

"Then that was what all that noise up at your place meant, sir?" asked Andy.

"Nothing else," Mr. Tatum replied. "When my wife and the woman in the kitchen saw him throw me aside as if I might be a ten-pin on the alley, leap into his little car and start away at full speed, they couldn't keep in any longer, but set up an outcry. I expected that everything was lost, when later on I happened to remember about this tricky bend down here, and how many careless drivers had been upset into the bog. So off I started on the run, hoping something might have happened to the thief to throw him. Then I came on you boys, just carrying him out. I'd like you to look in his inside pocket, Rob, and see if there's a roll of bills with a broad rubber band around it."

"Certainly I will, Mr. Tatum," answered the scout leader, suiting his action to the words.

It required no second effort to locate the fat wad of bills mentioned by the old farmer, and when Rob drew this forth, Mr. Tatum's stern face relaxed in a broad smile of satisfaction.

"That's a piece of great, good luck, let me tell you, boys!" he exclaimed, after Rob had promptly handed the package of bank-notes over to him. "I

never expected I would have this in my possession so soon again. You may be sure I'll see to it that a clever rascal like this fellow has no further chance to steal it."

Rob started again to make a further search.

"Here's a revolver, sir," he announced, presently. "Perhaps you had better take it so as to be in a condition of preparedness to defend your property. We scouts always believe in being ready. That's what they're all talking about in the papers right now, getting our country prepared for the trouble everybody hopes will never come."

"Thank you, Rob, I believe I will keep that gun," said Mr. Tatum. "Up to now I confess that I've had a queer sort of prejudice against owning anything of this sort. One experience has cured me of that silly notion. Owning a weapon doesn't necessarily make a man out to be an aggressive character, as I used to believe. If the time comes when he needs it for self-defence he may want it the worst possible way. Yes, I'm going to stand guard over this money until I get it safe in my bank at Riverhead to-morrow. Thank you again, Rob."

"This man is recovering, Mr. Tatum, and I

should say will be able to walk before many minutes," remarked Rob.

"He's listening to all you are saying," interposed Andy. "I saw him open his eyes and stare around. Now he's got them shut again, but he's only playing 'possum, Rob."

"What do you want done with him, Mr. Tatum?" asked the scout leader, motioning to the recumbent figure.

"Oh! I guess that I haven't the time to bother with him," came the reply. "I'm too busy with my crops. He didn't get anything but a bad spill, and some bruises that'll hurt for a time to come. It's true he treated us harshly, and gave me a nasty knock, but he's lost his car, and I've got his gun, so we'll call it quits and let him go, if it's all the same to you, boys."

"Oh! so far as that goes this is none of our funeral, sir," laughed Merritt, "and as we're on a hike ourselves we couldn't think of bothering with a prisoner."

"I hope you will all come up to the house with me and stop over to dinner," said the farmer, hardly knowing how he could return the great favor which the lads had done him. He knew from former experience that scouts are never



allowed to accept pay for having done a good deed.

One pair of eyes at least commenced to glisten just about that time. Tubby almost held his breath while waiting to hear what Rob might say in reply to this hearty invitation.

"At any rate," the scout leader answered, "we expect to pass your house on our way, Mr. Tatum, and we can decide whether to accept your kind invitation or not after we've met your good wife, and heard what she has to say in the matter."

"Let's be starting!" suggested Tubby with wonderful promptness.

"Wait just a minute or two," objected Rob. "This poor chap has had a pretty painful crack, and he's lucky if he hasn't broken his collar bone. I happen to have some fine liniment in my pocket that I forgot to put in my pack, and snatched up just before leaving home. Now, even if he is a rascal, he's human nevertheless, and will suffer a lot. What little I can do to alleviate his pain I'm bound to attempt. That's scout law, you know, Mr. Tatum."

Perhaps the gruff farmer could not quite understand the full significance connected with the

idea of binding up the wounds of an enemy so as to make him have "coals of fire heaped on his head," but at the same time he watched curiously while Rob set about loosening the man's shirt collar, and then rubbing his healing ointment upon the discolored spot he found near the man's shoulder-blade.

Possibly it might give the fellow something to wonder over. Several times Rob saw his eyes flash open, and he knew the other was staring at him as though puzzled to account for his Samaritan treatment.

"That's the best I can do for him," said Rob, getting on his feet and replacing the little metal box in which he carried the magical ointment. "If he's wise he'll make tracks out of here without waiting to find if you change your mind, Mr. Tatum. If I were in his boots I'd see a doctor as soon as I could about that bad bruise. It might turn out even worse than it looks."

Rob was saying this mostly for the benefit of the man himself. It was good advice and came direct from the scout's heart. Rob could feel for any one in pain even though it were only a miserable hobo, or a scamp like this fellow.

They turned away and left him there, heading

up the rise after turning the bend. Andy lingered behind for some reason. When the others were picking up their packs preparatory to accompanying the farmer the rest of the way, Andy rejoined them. While Rob had not said a word about it he must have noticed how the other hung back; and that he easily guessed the motive actuating Andy was manifest from the question he asked when the other rejoined them.

"Well, did he sneak off, Andy?"

"Just what he did as soon as you all got out of sight," came the response. "He was shamming most of the time, and able to scramble to his feet. But that neck gave him a wrench. I saw him claw at it. He went down the road in a hurry, after one look at his overturned runabout. We're well rid of the thief, I expect."

"He never will be missed!" hummed Tubby, who was doing his level best to get all his belongings in their accustomed places, as before, to the tuneful melody of coffeepot striking against tins and frying-pan.

Mr. Tatum was happy. Indeed, there was good reason why he should feel as though Fortune had played him a clever trick; for after losing his roll of bills it had been suddenly returned to him as

by the touch of a magician's wand. He was prepared to back up his wife's expected invitation with force, if necessary, in order to square things with these fine scouts.

They soon climbed the hill. At the top they found the people of the farmhouse eagerly awaiting them. Ere then some knowledge of the truth must have filtered into their brains, on discovering the four scouts in the company of Mr. Tatum, and also detecting the broad grin on the unusually stern face of the old farmer.

"Got it all back, Anna!" he called out, holding up the roll of bills. "The engine played a trick on the thief, and the car ran away with him, dumping everything in the bog at the foot of the hill. Here's Rob Blake and some of his chums again, and they fetched the man out of the mud, finding my property in his pocket. Oh! we concluded to let the poor critter get away, because my money was recovered, his car wrecked and he got some pretty bad hurts in the bargain. And Ma, I insisted that these brave boys stop over with us to dinner. You make it unanimous!"

Which was just what "Ma" did with a vim, so that Tubby beamed and chuckled, well knowing Rob could not have the heart to decline such an

urgent invitation. Tubby was bent on carrying out his share of the mission upon which he and his chums had started; but at the same time a "call to arms" was something he never felt able to resist, especially when he had reason to believe that a feast would await their attention—as wounded unfortunates always gripped the heart of Rob, so "groaning tables" riveted the attention of Tubby.

To tell the truth, none of the boys felt sorry that things had turned out as they did. There was no great hurry in order to accomplish their mission, and above all things, Rob wished to act naturally, so as to not excite the suspicions of crafty Martin Carmody when later on they came in contact with that irresponsible individual.

Accordingly, it having been decided to hold over until afternoon, Tubby gladly relaxed. The anxious look vanished altogether from his plump, rosy face. He begged Andy to help get that load from his back. Evidently he had certain articles in the line of food in his pack that he felt he must handle with care.

Rob entered into conversation with the farmer, apparently bent on hearing all the particulars of the recent bold attempt at robbery. Perhaps they

talked of other things as well, for the scout leader was a master-hand at picking up information, as his past record proved. Finally they were summoned to the dinner table, and Tubby looked about as happy as any one had ever known him to be when he discovered the multitude of good things to eat that thankful farmer's wife had laid out in order to show her appreciation of the services these lads had rendered.



## CHAPTER VII.

## IN THE SCRUB TIMBER.

Andy had occasion to warn Tubby several times during the course of that glorious meal, fearing the other might be foundered by stowing away too much food. While Andy was too discreet to "speak right out in meeting," and shame his stout chum, he did manage to tread on Tubby's toes several times, and also gave him sundry suggestive frowns accompanied by shakes of the head, all of which the other received with that bland good-natured smile of his—and kept on eating.

During the course of the meal the conversation often reverted to the recent odd happening. Mr. Tatum seemed to think it an act of Providence that Rob and his mates chanced to be on the spot when sorely needed.

"That's a fatality with some of us, Mr. Tatum," Merritt announced, with a touch of pride in his manner. "Scouts always keep prepared for

emergencies, and so, as it happens lightning often strikes when you've got a steel rod on your chimney to attract it, we frequently get opportunities to show what we're made of."

"Well, all I can say," remarked the farmer, seriously, "is that you are capable of doing your duty every time. If any kind of trouble hung over my head I believe I would sooner have a troop of scouts come to my assistance than a like number of grown men."

"There's one little thing Mr. Tatum was telling me, boys," remarked Rob, "that so far none of you ever heard. That man wasn't alone, it seems. He had a companion with him when he arrived in his second-hand little runabout, which for all we know he may have stolen somewhere back on the road."

"Another thief, was there?" ejaculated Tubby, as well as he could with his mouth pretty well filled. "Why did they separate, tell us, Rob?"

"Mr. Tatum doesn't know," replied Rob. "The other was a boy who looked so half-starved and forlorn that somehow they can't quite make up their minds he could be as bad as the man he was with."

"What became of him?" demanded Merritt.

"When the man started in to threaten, showing that weapon of his, the boy looked frightened, they say," continued Rob. "He turned and ran away as fast as he could, and that was really the last they saw of him. It even looked as if the poor fellow might have been glad of a chance to skip out of bad company."

Mrs. Tatum here took it upon herself to break into the conversation.

"He looked so thin and broken-up and scared that if he should come to me again I'd feel it my duty to feed him, and take him in. I don't believe he was really bad, for he didn't have the face of a criminal, only one that made you think he had suffered heaps and heaps. It haunts me still, for somehow I seem to remember a poor little fellow who once called me mother, but whom we laid away years ago."

Nothing more was said, for all of them seemed affected by this reference to past wounds that would never seem to wholly heal. Tubby, though, was seen to shake his head several times, and even lay down some food he had been about to devour. Possibly he did not want the supply to run short in case that hungry-looking lad came along later, and begged to be fed.

In due time Rob announced that they had better be starting forth. Tubby made no complaint, simply asking that his burden be properly adjusted on his broad back.

The last they saw of Farmer Tatum and his wife, they were waving after them. It had been quite an adventure, all told, and one they would be likely to remember in times to come with pleasure.

Bravely they pushed on. As a rule the road they followed was pretty level, though occasionally they struck low, sandy hills that required extra exertion in order to mount to the top. When it was possible Rob skirted these elevations, having pity on poor Tubby. This was done when the undergrowth was sparse and the trees for the most part consisted of dwarf oaks.

"Here's the railroad at last!" burst from Meritt about the middle of the warm afternoon, as they came out of what had seemed to be an interminable stretch of scrub.

East and west the twin rails ran, glistening in the bright sunlight. Somehow or other that track seemed to connect them with civilization, for they knew that after passing down through the middle of Long Island it finally reached Greater New

York, now reckoned the largest city of the whole world, not even excepting London itself.

"Do we rest a bit now, Rob?" asked Andy, thinking more of poor Tubby than his own state of weariness, for the fat scout was stubbornly resisting the inclination to admit himself near collapse, and had his teeth closely pressed together.

"We might find a shady spot, and lie around for say, half an hour," the leader told him. "I can't allow any more time than that. We have several miles yet to cover before we reach the place where we're meaning to camp."

Tubby sprawled out as soon as they took his pack away, as though meaning to secure all the benefit possible from the stop.

"Oh! needn't bother about me, fellows," he remarked presently, when the breeze had partially cooled his fevered brow, "I'll be as fresh as a daisy by the time we get the signal to start. I recuperate fast. But say, Rob, I've noticed you turning your head to look back ever so often. Sometimes you would do it slyly, and then again it would be suddenly, with a jerk. Mind telling us what it might mean?"

Merritt gave a little chuckle as though something humorous had struck him.

"Same old story, perhaps, 'Tubby,'" he went on to say; "a case of the girl I left behind me. Lucy Mainwaring was expected back to-day sometime, I heard, and like as not Rob here felt pretty mean that he had to tramp out of town just twenty-four hours too soon, eh, Rob?"

The scout master joined in the laugh. He did not seem a particle annoyed, for his heart was so fresh and young that love affairs had as yet taken no particular grip upon him. Lucy was a mighty attractive girl and all that, and Rob was very fond of her, but they were only good chums, if the truth were told.

"That time you made a poor guess, Merritt," he went on to say, presently. "I never gave a single thought to Hampton or Lucy or home. Fact is, somehow I got an idea in my head we were being followed, though I admit that if it's really so the fellow seems to be too smart to betray himself."

"Whew! then you must have thought you saw *something*, Rob," observed Andy, "or you wouldn't talk that way."

"Several times I had an idea I glimpsed a mov-



ing object among the bushes, but I couldn't make sure," Rob confessed. "After all it may only have been a bird flashing past in the sunlight, which is dazzling, you notice; or perhaps a limb that we pushed aside in coming along the trail flew back again, and just caught my eye. Though I've tried again and again I haven't yet been able to make sure."

"Followed?" repeated Tubby. "Who'd ever think of tracking us, I want to know? We used to suspect that Hodge Berry and his crowd of all sorts of mean things. They even trailed our bunch into the woods and tried to play all sorts of tricks on us; but Rob, you don't think they bothered chasing after us on this occasion, do you?"

"Rats!" scoffed Andy; "both those fellows are back numbers in Hampton nowadays, Tubby; so forget them. Rob didn't say he was sure, only that he had an idea some one might be following us. He'll continue to take observations from time to time, never fear, and if he makes any discovery depend on it the rest of us'll know it in three shakes of a lamb's tail."

"I was wondering," remarked Merritt, presently, "how it happened Martin Carmody came

to this particular part of the country when he fled from the Capital?"

"Nobody knows for certain," replied Rob, "only they have guessed that in years past he may have lived here on Long Island, and somehow felt drawn back by memories of boyhood days. But please forget to mention that name again while we're up in this region; or if you have to speak it, lower your voice almost to a whisper. You remember they say the trees have ears, and we never can tell where a shrewd crazy man may be lurking."

Tubby started looking all around him at hearing this. He was beginning to feel his flesh creeping in a queer way; hunting for a demented person was a new experience for the scouts, and the more Tubby got to thinking about it the vaster the possibilities for trouble seemed to stretch.

"Excuse me, Rob," Merritt hastened to say, his face reddening a little more than was already the case, "I ought to know better than that. A scout should never forget that the wind carries sounds like anything, and you never can tell what lies beyond your limited range of vision. Let's fix it so that when we want to mention that person we'll just say 'you know,' and hold up a hand

with the two scout-oath fingers extended this way."

"Not a bad idea," commented Rob, and the subject was dropped.

Shortly afterwards a fresh start was made. Tubby made out to be fresh, and if at times he had to grit his teeth and summon all his resolution to the fore in order to keep going, at least he did not break down under the strain. Tubby was young and healthy, despite his avoirdupois, and capable of exerting considerable will power when it became necessary.

Slowly the afternoon was wearing away. They must surely be drawing near the particular section of country where Rob hoped to make camp. He consulted the letter of instructions several times, and kept a bright lookout for certain objects bordering the winding trail that would tell him his location, according to the directions given by those energetic agents of Mr. Wainwright.

Tubby was getting along fairly well when all of a sudden he tripped and fell prostrate. What a clatter of tinware and cooking utensils followed. Andy declared that if there had been any Shinnecock Indians within a mile of them they might of a certainty expect to be attacked—that is, had

they been living in the days of several hundred years ago, when Captain Kidd plied his trade along the shores of Long Island, and the Dutch burghers of Manhattan sat upon their doorsteps and smoked their long clay pipes.

"Please go on, Rob, and I'll join you after I get these things gathered up again," Tubby entreated. "No, I had rather do it myself, thank you, Andy. It was my own fault. I was so clumsy, I ought to pay the penalty. I'll catch up with you right away, never fear. Please go along, all of you, and give me a chance to show that I'm not just a paper scout."

Seeing that Tubby really meant it, Rob signalled for the others to fall in and accompany him.

"We'll just go fifty paces or so and then wait for him, boys," he told Merritt and Andy. "Tubby can be frightfully set in his way when he wants to. I believe in letting him mend his own troubles when he takes the bit in his teeth, like he's doing now. It's going to do him more good than being helped would. The fellow who learns to depend on himself seldom gets left, while he who waits for some one to help carry his burdens grows lazier all the time."

"Just as you say, Rob; I think it a good idea," agreed Merritt.

"Tubby is certainly the clumsiest as well as the best-hearted fellow I ever met," Andy was saying, as they walked slowly along the trail.

"Let's stop here and wait for him," remarked Rob, just at that moment.

They stood and listened. The chatter of some crows over in a patch of thick wood came to their ears, and caused Andy to say they were holding a "caw-cus." Merritt had started to laugh at this attempt at wit when suddenly they heard a loud shout in the direction whence Tubby had been left.

"Hi! come back with that, you! Well, of all the nerve! Rob, Merritt, Andy, this way, quick! Oh! he's gone, as sure as anything! Too bad, too bad!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

## TUBBY MEETS WITH A LOSS.

When the three boys, after a quick run, came to where Tubby was standing, looking ruefully around him, they were pleased to see that from all appearances their fat chum was unharmed.

"What's happened, Tubby?" demanded Andy, before Rob could say a word. "Did a sly fox jump in on you and make off with some of your eatables; or was it a striped-tailed 'coon, Tubby?"

"Huh! guess I know a *boy* when I see him!" snorted Tubby, "and he didn't have any striped tail either, if you want to know, Andy."

Rob showed increased interest at hearing this.

"What's that you say, Tubby—a boy jumped out on you, did he? What did you cry at him to leave alone?"

"Why, Rob, he pounced on that nice loaf of home-made bread I've been toting along for a starter, you know. I hate to have to do without my toast in the mornings until flapjack time comes around."



"Took it right out of your hands, do you mean, Tubby?" asked Andy, skeptically.

"I never said he did," retorted the other. "When I tripped, and my things flew every-which-way around, that precious loaf managed to lodge on a bunch of roots you see over there. Well, I had fixed some of the traps, and was just thinking of stepping over to get the bread so I could stow it away again in the paper that had been around it, when I saw a skinny-looking boy leap out of the bushes like a wildcat, grab up my loaf and then fly away with it—course, I mean he ran like the wind, and didn't have wings at all."

Rob wagged his head wisely.

"It seems then, that after all, I did see some one following us," he remarked in a satisfied tone. "And just as I half suspected it was that boy they told us about at Mr. Tatum's. He's kept tagging after us all these miles, just managing to stay far enough behind not to be discovered, as he believed."

Tubby showed intense interest.

"Rob, I should say you were right!" he exclaimed. "I remember now they did say he looked thin and half starved, as if he might have been

badly used while in the company of that thief who tried to rob the farmer. Rob, between us I'm almost tempted to say I'm glad he got away with that bread, though I did have my mouth set for toast for breakfast to-morrow. I'll try and bear it, because he needed it heaps more than I could."

That was Tubby, generous to a fault. He would not allow a trembling waif or a stray dog go hungry, or lack for a place to sleep, if he could prevent it.

"I wonder why that boy followed us all this way?" ventured Merritt, looking toward the leader as if to ask his opinion.

"Oh! there might be a lot of answers to that question," Rob assured him. "First of all, having finally broken away from the man who seemed to have some sort of control over him, the boy wouldn't know which way to go. Then again he saw we were boys like himself and that would attract him. Perhaps, our scout suits may have caught his eye, and made him think we would be friends to a poor castaway."

At that Tubby uttered a sudden cry.

"Why, Rob, how could you hit on that so easy?" he exclaimed. "As sure as anything I do believe he did have on what looked like an old faded and

torn scout coat of khaki, as if at some time or other he might himself have belonged to a troop. Sure thing, it must have been our suits that caught his eye. He knows that scouts are trained never to turn the cold shoulder on any one in trouble. But shucks! he must have been almost starving to grab my bread like he did, and then bolt like a frightened rabbit. I honestly believe he was eating as he ran."

Rob was rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"It begins to look as though we had run up against another little mystery right in the start," he went on to say. "Whoever this boy is he evidently objected to keeping company with a thief any longer than he could help. That stamps him as being made of better stuff than the man we took out of the bog. In fact, if the boy was once a scout it proves him fairly decent. I think we'll see more of him, sooner or later."

"Sure thing," grinned Tubby. "A little loaf of bread doesn't go far when a fellow is *awful* hungry, and has good stowage room below his belt. He'll come back again, never fear. Next time we'll try and hold him."

"But, Tubby," remarked Andy, as though trying to test the other, "how about our supply of

grub? It might give out with another mouth to fill."

That was really touching Tubby in his weakest spot. He made a grimace, and after a heavy sigh went on to say:

"Oh! I expect we might find some way to get hold of a new stock if it gave out; and anyhow I could cut down to half rations, which I would be only too glad to do if the poor chap joined us."

And every one of his mates knew that Tubby was just the fellow to go without even a bite to eat, if by so doing he could be of some help to another in greater need than himself. He had proved this more than once in the past, as they well remembered.

"Well, after we've helped you load up again, Tubby," Rob explained, "for we insist on doing that, you know, this time, we'll make another start. Half an hour ought to see us at our destination. That will give us time to arrange our camp after a fashion."

"If we figure on staying several days in one spot, Rob," said Andy, "I move we build one of those brush shanty shelters. They are easy to make, and in case of a storm would shed water pretty fairly."

"We'll talk that over to-morrow, Andy," the scout leader told him. "For to-night, as there seems to be no prospects of rain, we can make out well enough without any cover over us but the trees and the heavens. Merritt, give Tubby a lift with that pack, please. Now, let's be off."

Tubby lingered only long enough to cast a half regretful look in the direction the fugitive boy had taken when fleeing from the spot with his stolen loaf of bread. There was not the slightest sign of any one, if that was what Tubby was hoping to discover, and with a sigh he began following in the wake of Merritt, who kept glancing around from time to time as if to make sure the fat scout had not dallied in the rear.

The half hour mentioned by Rob was long in passing, according to how time is measured by heart throbs, and long-drawn sighs, and grunts of weariness, as emitted by the rear-guard. But everything, no matter how odious, must have an end, and finally Tubby was delighted to hear Rob call out:

"This place looks good to me, so suppose we call it a day's work and drop our camp stuff. There's a spring of nice, clear water gurgling out yonder, and enough slope to the ground to

carry any rain off, if it happens to come along. Fact is, I would call this an ideal camp-site, and we might look a long time without running across its equal."

Bang! and Tubby had hastened to deposit his load on the ground, utterly regardless of what racket he made in so doing. He was already stretching himself on his back, so as to get the "kinks out of his system," as he hastened to explain, and not because he wanted to shirk any work at camp making.

"Gimme just five minutes, boys," he pleaded, "and I'll be with you. I always have to stretch after undergoing any physical exercise like toting a pack over miles and miles and miles of country. But my powers of recuperation are good, and you'll see me come back in a jiffy."

The others, in fact, were not averse to a little rest before starting in, so they followed Tubby's example, and dropped on the ground, where they sat with their hands clasped about their knees, and in ordinary tones chatted on various subjects.

"This is the last time I mean to mention the matter," Rob told them in his positive fashion that always made a deep impression. "All of us must remember to act in a perfectly natural way.



We have come up here just to camp out, and have a jolly time, such as scouts love to indulge in. All our conversations when we talk aloud must bear that idea out, so that if any one happens to hear us, he'll get no other notion in his head. If there's occasion to consult over any other business it must be done in whispers. That's all. Tubby, please take notice."

"Oh! I get you, Rob, and you needn't be afraid of me giving the game away. I expect to keep on my guard right along. You'll find me the most mysterious fellow you ever ran across. I mean to always take a good look around before I do any whispering. Right now, Rob, I can see where there are several lovely flat stones lying that ought to help make a dandy fireplace for cooking."

"Just leave that to me, will you, Tubby?" interjected Andy. "I had it all fixed in my mind that I was going to build the fireplace the first thing. You always insist on doing most of the cooking, and I want to feel that I'm of *some* use around the camp. I'll promise to look after part of the wood supply in the bargain. I'd love to use that new camp hatchet we've fetched along, which Rob gave a beautiful edge to, so that it bites into

the wood like everything. 'As I feel rested, here goes to make a start.'

After Andy began to busy himself, even Tubby found it impossible to lie around any longer, so that presently the scene was a bustling one, with the four scouts all engaged in various duties, all for the purpose of making a comfortable camp.

The stones for the fireplace were soon gathered, Tubby insisting on having a hand in the building of the shrine at which it would be his duty to three times a day offer up thanks, and devout services. Meanwhile, Merritt undid his pack and hung his blanket over a convenient limb to air, while Rob was doing about the same thing over another limb.

Many hands make light work. Before long that particular spot took on all the aspect of a regular camp. The fire was started, and Andy, hustling to lay aside a goodly supply of fuel whanged away with lusty zeal, using the hatchet with more or less skill, according to his scout education along such lines.

The afternoon was almost over, and before a great while night would come stealing around them. Rob, as was his custom, made a little survey of the vicinity. He always liked to know the

lay of the land when camping. So often things happened in the night, and in case of any sudden alarm it was wise to have a mental map of the immediate neighborhood to fall back upon. After all, it was only another application of the scout maxim of "being prepared."

When Tubby finally began actual preparations of cooking supper, his round face fairly beamed with happiness. It was an old story, yet ever new with Tubby, this getting meals ready. He might tire of many things on repetition, but catering to his daily wants in the line of good, healthy, appetizing food was a subject that always appealed to his heart.

Indeed, when the captivating odors began to steal about, the others could be seen to cast many anxious glances on the sly toward the fire; and Merritt was even noticed consulting his nickel watch by the firelight, as though wondering why time seemed to pass so slowly. He even held it up to his ear, just as though in fear that it had stopped working, though this must have been a mistake for he did not attempt to wind it.

But after the night had finally settled down about them, Tubby sweetly informed his sorely-tried mates that "supper is ready, fellows." Ac-

cordingly they hastened to find seats near the source of supply, after which operations were commenced looking to a raid on the provision market.



"Seems like old times again, boys!"—Page 91





## CHAPTER IX.

## UNEXPECTED GUESTS.

"Seems like old times again, boys!" Andy was remarking, after he had filled his tin cup a second time with the coffee that tasted so fine, as concocted by the expert, Tubby Hopkins.

"Well, we certainly can look back to a heap of good times, taking it all in all," Merritt went on to say, while his eyes assumed the look that told how his mind was busy delving into the past. "Few scouts have had the chances to meet with the exciting adventures that have come our way here and abroad. In Mexico, at Panama, across where the Old World Nations are grappling at each other's throats, and then at the late Exposition out in California where some of our number have been given golden opportunities to pick up knowledge by actual *experience*—which is a whole lot better than acquiring knowledge through reading."

"I'm only wondering," said Tubby, after taking a good look around him, "how we're going

to win the confidence of this man we've started out to find—you know," and he held up his hand with the first and second fingers bent over, as in the case of a scout taking the vow to obey the rules of the organization.

"That will come to us by degrees," said Rob. "All of us can be thinking it over, and when an idea happens to crop up let me know. I don't as a rule believe in crossing a stream until I get to it, but it's often just as well to arrange a plan of campaign ahead."

Tubby grinned as though he saw the opening he sought.

"Glad to hear that invitation, Rob," he remarked, softly. "Now I've got a proposition to make that just popped into my head all of a sudden."

"We'd be glad to hear what it is, Tubby, if only you'll keep your voice toned down to a low notch," the scout leader told him.

"Sure thing, Tubby," added Andy, encouragingly, and preparing to chuckle, for as a rule Andy did not seem to have a great deal of faith in any proposition suggested by the scout of ample waist, unless indeed it had to do with meals, when his opinion was well worth listening to.

Merritt, too, leaned forward a bit so that his head would come closer to those of the other fellows; for this thing of muttering confidences made hearing rather difficult, according to his notion, though the corporal did not own to any deafness.

“Well, I’ll tell you what the scheme is, and then you can veto it if you think it’s too cruel to try out,” began Tubby, hesitatingly. “I was thinking of what we’d heard about his having a boy of his own that was drowned, I think you said, Rob?”

“Yes, so Mr. Wainwright wrote; but go on, Tubby; you’ve got me interested already,” the patrol leader told him.

“The letter of instruction said that—you know—was interested in all scouts on account of his boy having belonged to the organization some time or other. Well, if he’s demented, why couldn’t one of us play the part of his boy, and influence him to give up the things he’s hidden? I know it seems awful mean, and all that, but when there’s something big at stake, people sometimes have to forget such side issues, and work with an eye single for the interests of Uncle Sam. Rob, what do you say to that?”

"I wouldn't want to express myself without a chance to consider the idea further," came the answer. "So far as the scheme itself goes, I own up it looks like a clever one, and does your head credit, Tubby."

"But not my heart, which is what you mean, Rob, and I know it," said the other dejectedly. "But then he would never know any different, and we might manage to coax him to go back with us to friends who could perhaps cure him of this sudden dementia!"

Andy began to chuckle about this time as though he had finally succeeded in discovering something comical to amuse him.

"What ails you, Andy?" asked Merritt, frowning at the other. "I don't see anything to laugh about in Tubby's scheme. Fact is, I take off my hat to him for having hit on a mighty clever idea, and one that didn't occur to any of us. Now you begin to grin, and make those silly noises as if you thought it a joke."

"He never can do it, that's all!" asserted Andy, vehemently.

"Do what?" asked Tubby, helplessly.

"He could squeeze, and squeeze, and after all he would be as big as two ordinary fellows," the

other went on to say, still shaking his head from side to side. "Even if a man happens to be loony is no reason that he can't tell a barn from a tree. Why, Tubby, bless your simple heart, you could never pass for anybody but yourself, or the fat boy in the freak show."

"Oh, is that what ails you, Andy Bowles!" exclaimed Tubby, scornfully. "Why I never expected to play the leading part in my little drama. You might be chosen by Rob to take on the character of the long-lost son. I'm satisfied enough to be the *brains* of the combination, and let others be the feet, and the hands and the *tail*!"

Andy stopped laughing. There were times when it proved to be dangerous business poking at Tubby, as one might a wild animal in a menagerie cage; he had a faculty for coming back with a thrust that hurt, and that reference to a tail was given with particular vim; for on more than one occasion nimble Andy had liked to play the part of a monkey in climbing trees, and doing stunts.

"As a last resort," said Rob, "we might take up a scheme like that. They say everything is fair in war, and when you're playing with fire you must expect to do some burning on your own ac-

count. But before that time comes some of us may think up a better and more human idea. Let's think it over—later."

Then Rob adroitly changed the subject as though he fancied they had done quite enough talking along those lines. There was no lack of a suitable theme to employ their minds, for with such a bounteous crop of adventurous times in the past, subjects kept cropping up almost without number.

This thing or that reminded one of them of certain events long since hull-down below the horizon of the past, and one reference always brought another theme to the fore, so that there was a constant chattering going on around the fire as they finished their first meal in camp.

After eating, Tubby was possibly most interested in sleeping. He could be depended on to look out for a soft spot to spread his blanket for the night, and one not too far away from the protecting fire. Tubby had a secret fear of some time or other being carried off bodily by some hungry wild animal—he was such a tempting plump morsel—though deep down in his heart he knew full well that a 'coon or 'possum might be the largest and most ferocious beast at large upon



the eastern end of Long Island—most of the devouring species of “wild beasts” lurked amidst the canyons of the other extremity of the island where the taller buildings of Brooklyn towered toward the heavens.

So after the dishes had been attended to, Tubby began to prowls around a bit, testing the various patches of earth he considered suitable for sleeping purposes. As he finally gave over his work it could be set down as certain that he must have decided on his location. With his appetite appeased and sleeping quarters assured, Tubby was now content to loll by the fire, joining in the general talk until such time as the order “to turn in” came from the scout leader.

It was *only* natural that sooner or later they should once more take up the subject of the prowling boy who had followed them all the way from the Tatum farm.

“Suppose he should come in on us to-night, Rob,” said Andy, “meaning to get away with some more of our eatables, wouldn’t it be a good thing if we laid a trap and caught him? First off he might kick and scratch, *thinking* we meant to do him harm; but after you got to saying a little to him he would understand we wanted to

be his friends. Tell us what you expect to do about it, Rob."

"Yes, please do," urged Tubby. "I'm particularly interested in that boy, well, because for one he's walking around with my loaf of bread inside him. Then in the second place he sure did look pretty mean, as if he hadn't a single friend in the wide world. I would never forgive myself if we didn't do everything we could to let him know what scouts are made of."

"I've been thinking about that myself," admitted the leader, quietly, "and trying to hatch up some scheme whereby we could trap him without hurting him too much. It looks as if he were mighty scary, for some reason or other. Perhaps he figures that because he was forced to go along with that road thief, people will think he's of the same stripe. We'll soon make him see, if he turns out to be a half-way decent sort, that we can read character better than to share the belief of the unthinking."

"Rob, oh! Rob!" whispered Tubby just then, as if in new excitement.

"What ails you now?" asked the scout master.

"Honest to goodness, I do believe he's watching us from that clump of bushes over back of

Merritt there, and not fifty feet away. I saw the same move, and it was a human face that peeked out, and then drew back like a flash when he discovered I was looking squarely that way. Rob, how would it do for one of us to slip away, and come up on the other side of those bushes? Then he could suddenly jump on the poor chap and hold him till we got him in camp, when the rest would be as easy as anything."

"Listen to Tubby, will you?" gasped Andy. "Why, he's as full of schemes to-night as an egg is of meat, and bully ones they are, too."

Rob looked as though he, too, rather approved of the idea advanced by the stout chum. It was really a pleasure to have Tubby show such a remarkable reasoning spirit. As a rule he had always been satisfied to let others do his thinking for him, and would simply follow blindly where they chose to lead.

"Not a bad plan at all, Tubby," he said, quietly, "and I'll be the one to try it. When I get up I'll stretch, and make out that I'm just going off in the other direction for a stroll. Once I'm out of sight I can make a quick turn and come up back of those bushes. In the meantime it might be wise for Tubby, and the rest of you, not to pay *too*

much attention to that quarter, for you might make him take the alarm."

The scout leader held his impatience in check until several minutes had passed. He did not wish to seem too eager to make a move. Finally he arose to his feet, began stretching in a matter-of-fact way, and then laughing, was just turning away when a fresh exclamation from Tubby startled them all.

"Jupiter! what's this mean, boys? Why, it's a man after all, and yes, there's another fellow coming along after him! This region doesn't seem to be quite as lonely and forsaken as we thought it was, after all. I wonder who they can be, and what they want?"

Rob was staring hard at the two advancing men, for since it had turned out that the boy was not concerned in the matter there was no further need of trying to put their little plan into operation.

First of all Rob noticed one thing. He could see the pair plainly in the bright glow of the fire they were now approaching and he noticed much to his surprise that they did not appear to be hunters, or natives of the back-bush country. Both men had rather the appearance of civilized human

beings, with traces of refinement and civilization about them, as though their home might be in a city rather than the farming regions, or along the oyster-growing bays of Long Island.

Rob Blake was quick at guessing the answer to a puzzling question. He had no time to consult with his chums, but with the remembrance of that letter in the sealed packet constantly before his mind he at once jumped to a conclusion.

What the boy decided was a possible answer to the conundrum was that these two strange men might be those agents sent up here from Washington by Mr. Wainwright—members of the Government Secret Service, who for some reason or other still hung about the region where they had located the fugitive wanted so badly by the authorities.

## CHAPTER X.

## A CLEAR FIELD.

Some boys are naturally much better fitted for jumping to conclusions. While Rob was mentally wrestling with that puzzling question, and solving it so quickly, at least in a plausible fashion, Tubby, for instance, continued to grope along in the dark.

He could not for the life of him understand just who those two gentlemen could be, unless they were real estate buyers looking for bargains back in the interior of Long Island, and later on to sell off their land in acre lots to credulous dupes in the metropolis for fine "chicken farms."

The men were evidently determined to make the acquaintance of the quartette of boys. Their curiosity had been aroused, and they wished to learn just why Rob and his chums had selected that lonely spot for camping. Then again, the delightful odors of the late supper still lingered in the air, and had managed to arouse their appetites.

"Tubby, since we're likely to have company," said Rob, quietly, "you had better be slicing some more of that ham, and filling up the coffee-pot again."

Woods' hospitality governs most camps where scouts are spending the days and nights in the open; so that this was not a strange remark for Rob to make. To Tubby it was a "call to arms," for he was never so happy as when getting something ready for guests, such was the generosity of his nature.

When the two men came up close to the fire, Rob saw they were both keen-eyed, and this immediately strengthened the conviction he was entertaining. Yes, he decided, the mention of Mr. Wainwright's name would be likely to strike them as a sudden shot. Rob immediately decided upon his tactics after this idea flashed into his mind.

"Good evening, boys," said one of the men in a pleasant voice, even while he eyed the scouts closely, "we happened to see the light of your camp fire, and thought we would stroll this way to make your acquaintance."

Rob may have thought that some people have a queer conception of what it means to "stroll," for undoubtedly those men had crept up through



the bushes with the intention of seeing who sat near that fire before they meant to disclose their presence in the vicinity—and Rob believed he knew why this caution was exercised, if, as he suspected, they were trying to shadow Martin Carmody without letting him learn of their presence.

“That was nice and neighborly of you, sir,” the scout leader hastened to say. “Plenty of room for you to sit on this log, and if you feel like having a cup of coffee, Tubby here is only waiting to make it in a jiffy.”

The two men exchanged looks. Evidently that invitation appealed to them, for if they had been hovering around this region for some days, in hiding, so to speak, so that their presence might not be suspected, they could not have fared sumptuously in the way of food and drink.

“That’s a kindness we appreciate very much, indeed,” the leading man quickly remarked, smacking his lips at the same time as he saw Tubby thrusting the coffee-pot back upon the fire, and then picking up the frying-pan as though he meant business. “You see, we are land buyers,” the man continued with a little smirk, Rob thought, “and for several days we’ve rather lost

ourselves in these endless scrub patches of dwarf oaks, and our food supply has about given out."

Rob thought it good policy to introduce himself and comrades, at the same time mentioning the fact that as scouts they were in the habit of doing more or less camping during vacation times.

"Glad to know you, boys," said the spokesman, insisting on shaking hands all around. "My name is er—Smith, Joseph Smith, and my friend here is Andrew Brown."

"Did you say you were from Washington, D. C.?" asked Rob in an apparently innocent manner.

Both men started and looked at him in a queer way.

"If I did," burst from the spokesman, "I must have been dreaming. We hail from New York City. We're in the speculative real estate business, and have taken some good money out of Long Island property."

"But you never managed to sell a Mr. Wainwright any of your real estate, did you, sir?" continued Rob, determined to learn the truth without any more beating about the bush.

If they had been surprised when he mentioned Washington they looked thunderstruck as the

name of Mr. Wainwright dropped from the boy's lips. After exchanging puzzling glances the men again turned their attention toward Rob.

"I thought the first one was a mere accident, my boy," said the taller man, seriously, "but when you follow it with the mention of a name so unusual as that of Wainwright I am forced to believe there is a meaning back of it all. Do you happen to know a gentleman who answers to that name?"

"I do," said Rob, serenely, "and his card reads Mr. Alexander Wainwright."

By this time he had both men "on edge" as Tubby afterwards said—Tubby, by the way, was squatting there close to the fire, so taken up with what was passing that his mouth had opened, and his eyes seemed as round as small saucers—in pawing for the coffee-pot without looking what he was doing, he managed to come in contact with a live coal, and received a smart burn that aroused him to consciousness that a cook should pay attention to his own business.

"Would you mind explaining just who and what you are, my young friend?" asked the tall man.

"Why I told you my name is Rob Blake, and

that I'm the leader of the Eagle Patrol connected with the Hampton Troop of Boy Scouts." And as he said this Rob smiled serenely.

"There's something more about this business," continued the so-called Smith, "than you've cared to tell us so far. Perhaps, now you even know our true errand up in this part of the country."

"Oh! I believe I do know why you gentlemen were sent up here," said Rob, indifferently, "but at the same time I'm pretty sure Mr. Wainwright doesn't have any idea you are hanging about here still."

His shot went home as could be seen in the sudden look of apprehension that the pair exchanged.

"Please go on and tell us more of what you know, son," asked the one who had up to this time done all the speaking. "From what you've said so far, it's plain that you've been commissioned by Mr. Wainwright to carry out some purpose of his. We would be much obliged to you if you felt that you could take us into your confidence. We sent in our report, and then took chances of hanging around, going to town once in so many days to learn if any dispatch had come telling us to complete the game."

Rob realized that in order to get rid of these

two Secret Service men it would be necessary to show them the letters sent by their superior at Washington. The sooner they were out of the region the better, since their continued presence was bound to threaten the success of the scouts' plans.

"In the first place," he started to say, softly, "we've settled it among ourselves that a certain name must not be mentioned except in a whisper, so please carry out the idea. Scouts are taught to understand that the wind has ears, and that sometimes even the rocks and trees have tongues to betray secrets."

Then he went on to tell how Mr. Wainwright was an old and valued friend of his folks in Hampton, and knew of many scout activities that Rob and his chums of the Eagle Patrol had been engaged in during the past. By degrees Rob came down to his receipt of the letter enclosing the sealed orders, and then he frankly handed the two communications, one after the other, to the men to read.

Merritt would never forget the look on their faces as they grasped the full significance of the whole thing. The clever scheme originating with their superior officer in connection with a boy

clad in khaki gaining the confidence of the wily fugitive just because his dead son had been a scout, must have aroused their admiration, for they could understand how it promised success that could really be attained in no other way, certainly not by force.

As the taller agent handed the papers back to Rob, he was saying:

"I see now that we made a terrible mistake, my comrade and I, in staying around here so long. We will start away within the hour, only waiting until we've had a mouthful of supper, for so far to-night we've gone hungry. That is too fine a game to have it queered by any false move on our part. Mr. Wainwright has excelled even himself in conjuring up such a scheme; and pardon me for saying it, son, but I'm of the opinion that if any one can put the game over, you are the boy to do it. I like the cut of your jib, and since you've spoken I can remember Mr. Wainwright telling of several dashing exploits a young scout friend of his carried to success. You were down in Mexico, weren't you; and across the water in Belgium and France last summer, seeing something of the terrible work going on there?"

It was Rob's turn to blush now, while Tubby

grinned extensively; his face was turned away from them at the moment else they might have seen the fat boy knock the backs of his thumbs together in imitation of applause, as though it certainly did him good to hear Rob, once in a while, get his deserts, despite his well-known modesty.

“Oh! forget all that if you please, sir!” the boy hurriedly exclaimed, “and let’s talk of the one thing that concerns us just now. If you’ve been lurking around here ever since sending in that report, perhaps you might give us a few additional bits of information connected with the person we’ve come to meet.”

“We’ll be only too happy to do so,” hastily replied the other, “because you deserve all the assistance possible. You’ll find him a pretty slippery customer, and dangerous as well. He’s suspicious of everybody he sees, and from his looks I should judge that his threat made to our chief was no idle one. If he suspects he is being spied on he is just the man to destroy those plates, no matter what happens to him.”

While Tubby went on with his cooking, Rob plied the Secret Service man with numerous questions, all of them to the point. In this fashion,



then, he managed to pick up added information with regard to the habits of Martin Carmody since coming to his Long Island retreat.

There is really no need of going into details concerning this at present, but it promised to be of more or less assistance to the scouts should they find it necessary to change their plans and hunt for Carmody, giving up the idea that the sight of their khaki suits would draw him to them.

By the time the half-hour was up, Tubby was ready to supply a bountiful spread, which his red face testified had been produced through much effort. The warm thanks the men bestowed upon him as they attacked the tempting meal rewarded Tubby many fold for his labor of love. All he asked was to see the food appreciated by those for whom it had been prepared.

Rob felt that he would have enjoyed further intercourse with the two agents. He could see that they were clever gentlemen, whose various experiences in their dangerous calling would doubtless provide a fund of exciting stories. Much as he would have enjoyed having them stay over, Rob did not dream of pressing them. He knew their continued presence in that vicinity would only be a source of peril to the success of

the mission Mr. Wainwright had entrusted to their care. Even if the fugitive happened to see them there in camp eating, and on familiar terms with the scouts, he might be deterred from approaching Rob and his merry friends, which would be almost a calamity.

And so, after they had finished their supper, Rob was glad to see the two visitors make ready to depart. The tall man squeezed Rob's hand and persisted in saying something more connected with his personal opinion of the scout leader; then, greatly to Rob's relief, they stalked away, and were soon heading toward the road that would in due time take them to the small station, where they could wait for a New York train.

## CHAPTER XI.

## A NEW RECRUIT.

"Now that the coast seems clear again," remarked Andy, some time later on, "why not begin to figure on what sort of a trap we ought to set."

"Trap!" echoed Tubby, looking alarmed at once. "Do you really think we'll be bothered with wild animals here, Rob?"

"He's speaking of that strange boy who has followed us from Tatum's, Tubby," the scout leader told him; "and who may come back again to supplement that loaf of dry bread with something a little more juicy."

"Oh! that's a different thing," observed the stout chum. "I guess we'll have to trap him as Andy says, only I hope he isn't going to be hurt in any way."

Andy had evidently been trying to conjure up some plan, because he immediately burst forth with a proposition.

"I know one sort of trap that would be likely

to do the business, Rob, if only you don't shut down on it as being a little too rough."

"Let's hear it, then, and we'll soon decide," he was told.

"Why, they catch crocodiles that way, I've read," began Andy, at which Tubby opened his mouth in astonishment and shook his head, as though any scheme that was fitted to such scaly reptiles could never secure his endorsement, no matter what its merits might be.

"You see," continued the expounder, quickly, "you pick out a nice strong sapling that's got a snap to it, and bend it down so that its tip can be hooked to a notched peg driven into the ground. Then there's a slip-noose tied to the same. If a chump, in passing over, gets his foot caught in that noose it tightens, and even a little jerk pulls the figure-four catch loose, when up flies the sapling with the poor chap dangling by his heels in the air!"

"Nothing doing, Andy!" immediately exclaimed Merritt.

"Oh! I never thought you could be so cruel, Andy!" whimpered Tubby, shivering as if he felt a sudden cold draught.

"Course, I didn't dream you'd take to my

scheme for a single minute," confessed Andy, with a shrug of his shoulders, "and I only spoke because it seemed to flash into my brain. All the same, forgetting about the cruelty, I say it would be a big success, and bring home the bacon every time."

Rob here took part in the discussion.

"I think we ought to be able to get up some sort of plan that will fill the bill, and not be cruel at all, boys," he went on to say. "For instance, the bait will have to be something attractive in the way of food. Then we can fix our beds so that at a given signal all four of us will jump up and have the fellow completely surrounded."

"That sounds more like it," admitted Tubby.

"Here are several trees," suggested Andy, falling in with the new idea immediately, "that will help to make a wall through which he can't escape, so that we can count on that side being secure, which would make only three others we'd have to look after."

Fellows as smart as Rob and his friends found little difficulty in making all the necessary arrangements. Then the subject was dropped for the time being, after which they lay around enjoying themselves as best they could, until the

hour growing late, it was proposed that they turn in.

Each one was given whispered directions by Rob before laying down. In this way even Tubby knew just what he was expected to do if Rob gave a sudden sharp whistle in the dead of night.

The bait had been set out in plain view, and so long as the fire continued to burn any one with sharp eyes could easily discover the portion of ham lying there. To a half-starved boy that would likely prove a lure he could not resist. So Rob believed they would have a visitor, in case he still hovered near by.

Now, while Rob was considered a light sleeper, and usually woke up on slight provocation, he did not feel that it would be wise to trust entirely to chance.

Looking the situation over he arranged a little device that he believed would give him due warning should any one try to pass in toward the food that was being used for a bait.

It was very simple after all, just stretching a heavy black thread across, and arranging this so that any one pressing against it hard enough to break the same would give his leg a slight jerk.

Rob was the last to lie down. He had also taken the precaution to warn his comrades that under no conditions were they to wander during the night, all of which they faithfully promised to remember and observe.

Just how long he slept, Rob could not even guess when he felt a sudden tug at his leg to which he had tied one end of the black thread.

Although he waked up instantly he did not move at once; he simply lay there and strained his ears, so as to discover what was going on. A shuffling sound reached him, which he immediately conjectured was made by some one crawling past.

Bit by bit, Rob managed to slightly raise his head, and presently he could catch glimpses of a figure, flattened out upon the ground, hunching by him. The fire was pretty low, but nevertheless Rob could see that it was the boy Tubby had told them about.

Waiting until the other had just about reached the alluring bait, Rob gave one quick whistle, and then scrambled erect. His three chums were already gaining their feet, all excitement, with Tubby rubbing his eyes as though he could not see what was going on around him.



It was not Rob's way to wait on others when he had a chance to do the work himself, so he instantly hurled his form at the figure that lay sprawled out on the ground, the intruder having been so astounded by finding himself completely hedged in that so far he had been unable to make a move toward escape.

Rob fell upon him and pinned him down. The boy began to struggle desperately, but as Merritt and Andy came to the assistance of the leader, there was not once chance in a thousand that the intruder could escape. There was Tubby also ready to flatten him out with his weight if the others showed signs of being unfit for the task.

"Keep still, you!" called Andy, as he hung on to one leg of the struggling boy. "We don't mean to hurt you—we want to be your friends! Stop that kicking and listen to reason. We're scouts, don't you understand, and mean you no harm—in fact, we want to *help* you."

Then Rob, too, took a hand in speaking reassuring words, so that between them they managed to get the frightened boy to comprehend that they did not mean to injure him, even though he had been caught in the act of stealing food from their camp.

Presently, when he thought it advisable to do so, Rob caused his chums to relax their holds, and the boy sat up. He still panted from his violent exertions, and there was a strange look on his face that Rob could not wholly understand.

By degrees, however, as the scout leader started talking in his convincing and soothing way, the boy seemed to begin to understand that they were meaning to be his friends; at least, a wan smile crept over his pale face and he showed more interest in what Rob was telling him.

“We happen to know,” the scout master went on to say, after a bit, “that you were with that man in the little runabout who got himself in trouble at the farmhouse this afternoon, but don’t think we believe you of the same stripe he proved to be. From the way you ran away when he was trying to rob the farmer’s family, we decided that you had no liking for anything of that sort, and wanted to quit his society. Is that so?”

“Yes, oh! yes, it was the chance I had been looking for a long time,” the boy excitedly told him. “I don’t know how he seemed to have such an influence over me, but I had to do everything he said when I looked into his eyes. They were

terrible eyes, let me tell you. But I hope I may never see him again, never!"

"How did you happen to get in such bad company then?" asked Rob.

The boy shook his head, and that dreamy look crept over his face again, until it almost seemed as though he were about to break down and cry.

"I don't know, and that's the truth, though perhaps you won't believe me!" he exclaimed, with his hands pressed convulsively together, and his eyes fastened on the face of the scout leader. "I can't seem to remember anything back of the day I first looked up into his face, and he told me I was going to stay with him. Sometimes I try and try to think, and just when it seems that I'm going to recollect, it all flies away again, and everything is just blank. Oh! if I could only grip hold of one little thing that would give me a start I might find out who and what I am, but I can't, I can't!"

The four scouts exchanged astonished looks. Somehow, the very earnestness with which the boy spoke, and his evident agony of mind, seemed to assure them he could not be trying to deceive them. Perhaps Rob may have heard of other instances where some accident had taken away

all memory of things in the past life of the person—*aphasia* he believed they called such a condition of mind—but never had he run across a case himself.

“Do you know your name at all?” he asked the boy, who gave his head a negative shake as he slowly replied:

“He called me just plain Bill, and that’s the only name I can think of.”

“Did it ever occur to you that that man knew who you were?” Merritt asked.

“I never could find out,” came the slow reply. “But from little things that he let drop from time to time as we roamed about the country as tramps I began to think he had picked me up on the road somewhere, after I had lost my mind, and wandered away from my home. Oh! did I *ever* have a home, or a mother, and father? It’s a terrible thing not to be able to remember. Sometimes I even wished I could die, because I suffered so.”

“You say he was a tramp, but so far as I’ve known, hoboes don’t very often ride in runabouts, even if they are old cars,” observed Rob, partly to draw the attention of the poor fellow away from his own misery.

"Oh! he just took that car early this morning from where it had been left in front of a lonely house," the boy hastened to explain. "Hank seemed to know something of how to run a machine like that. Then later on he said the gasoline was giving out, and that he would have to pick up some ready cash so as to buy more when it was gone. I guess that was why he started to steal from that farmer, though I've known him to do lots of things just as bad before."

"Did he treat you cruelly while you were with him?" asked Andy.

"N-no, not very bad," the boy told them. "He said he only wanted me along for company, and to practice on, because I was a good subject since I had lost my memory of everything in the past. He said, too, he had saved my life, which I took to mean that I would have died on the road if he hadn't looked after my wants up to the time part of my mind got to working again. But I was determined to give him the slip at the first chance—and I did."

"Well, you're going to stay with us while we're in camp up here," Rob went on to announce in that positive way of his. "You understand that, don't you; and you can count on us being good

friends? When we go back home to Hampton we'll try and see if we can find out anything about your folks, for as like as not there'll be some way in which things can be traced."

"Oh! it makes me happy to hear you say that!" said the boy, with a deep sigh as though he might be having considerable difficulty in holding back his emotion. "But somehow I seemed to know you would prove to be good fellows. It must have been on account of your uniforms. You see, some time or other I must have belonged to the scouts too, though I think, and think, and don't seem to remember a single thing about it."

"Tubby, see if you can scare up something to eat without doing any cooking," said the leader, "and in the morning we'll give him a feast that'll warm his heart. Then we'll manage to lie down again, and get some more sleep."

## CHAPTER XII.

## A BROKEN CIRCUIT.

They managed to get Bill something to eat, and made him a comfortable bed, for it chanced that Merritt had an extra blanket along, not a very thick or heavy one, but answering the purpose.

Perhaps Tubby may not have been wholly sure that he would find the strange boy there when he awakened in the morning. That did not seem to interfere to any great extent with his sleeping, for he was the first to proclaim through his deep breathing that he was lost to all cares and troubles.

Rob did not give himself any uneasiness about the prospect of Bill taking "French leave" during the remainder of the hours of darkness. He believed he had convinced the boy they meant to be his good friends, and that it would indeed be silly of him to dream of giving them the slip.

His confidence was not misplaced. Upon opening his eyes soon after dawn came, Rob saw the



boy sitting there by the fire, his head sustained by one hand, and a serious look on his thin face, as though once more he might be cudgeling his brains in the vain endeavor to remember something that would give a clue to his past life.

All of them were soon up and busily engaged. Bill wanted to assist, and believing that it would make him more contented if he knew he was doing something to help "pay for his board," as Andy put it in a whisper, Rob assigned him the task of fetching in the wood for the cooking fire.

The boy certainly ate like a hungry wolf when that tempting breakfast of bacon and fried eggs was served. Mrs. Tatum had insisted on making them take a couple of dozen fresh "hen fruit," as Tubby called them, when they were leaving the farm on the low hill. It must have been a long time since Bill had enjoyed a treat like this. He seemed to know something about cooking, gleaned perhaps, during his experience as a scout; but Hank, the man in whose company he had been roaming the country during some months past, had been a poor forager, and their supplies, Bill admitted, were always at low ebb.

From time to time Rob engaged him in conversation. His object in so doing was twofold.

While he was interested in learning that the boy could talk upon many subjects and quite intelligently, too, Rob was at the same time hoping some casual remark might suddenly awaken the slumbering memories that lay dormant, and one thing lead to another until poor Bill would find out who he was.

In the beginning it was deemed wise to keep every reference to Martin Carmody under the ban. The name, above all things, must never be spoken, Rob had decreed, and when they found occasion to discuss their plans, veiled references must be made. They need not depend on Bill to be of any assistance; and who could say how risky it might be entrusting him with their secret? The fewer they took into their confidence the better; that was Rob's motto.

Merritt amused himself during this while in watching Rob talk to Bill, drawing his own conclusions. When he and Andy chanced to come together later on, away from the fire, Merritt plucked the other's sleeve, and keeping his voice low so as not to be overheard went on to say mysteriously:

"Rob's got some sort of clue, believe me, Andy!"

"What do you mean by saying that, now? Is it about—you know—or are you having just Bill in your mind, Merritt?" demanded the other.

"Oh! it was Bill I meant," explained the corporal. "You see, while Rob keeps him talking I notice that he's watching the boy's face all the time, as if looking for signs. Then some of his questions are meaning more than they seem to on the surface. Rob is fishing for a *clue*. Once I thought he must have hit on something or other, for when Bill was turning his head away I saw Rob lean forward and stare hard at him. I wonder what he's got in his mind—Rob, I mean, for I know by the signs that he's on a warm trail."

"Never fear," said Andy, quickly, "but that Rob will take us into the secret with him when he gets good and ready. He likes to run a thing down to a certain point by himself, and then invite the rest to join in the wind-up. But I must say this is a queer thing to happen. I wonder how it would feel now if all of a sudden I couldn't remember a single thing that had ever happened to me back of this minute! Oh! say, it must be just *awful* not to know who or what you are, where you came from, and all that."

"I guess nobody can imagine one-tenth of the

horror that it gives a fellow to find himself in that condition," asserted Merritt, feelingly. "Didn't you hear him say that more than once he wished he were dead, so as to end the misery he felt?"

"Then I certainly hope we are able to learn something of his past, so he can pick up his life again just where he dropped it. If any fellow can give him a lift I'd wager our Rob can."

From remarks such as this, made from time to time by the boys not only of the Eagle Patrol but others in the troop as well, it can be easily understood how much real confidence was placed in Rob Blake by his fellow scouts. When a leader can awaken such absolute faith in the minds of his comrades his power for accomplishing things must always be greatly strengthened. Rob was evidently fully appreciated by his friends and chums.

It had been planned that they should begin on this day and try to attract the notice of the fugitive Treasury Department employee, who was laboring under such a strange delusion, and hiding somewhere in the scrub thickets of Long Island.

This must only be done in the natural way.

They were to act just as though they had sought this vicinity simply to camp, and enjoy the outdoor life as scouts are taught to do. It would be advisable to cover quite some territory, and as they scoured the vicinity, do considerable shouting, with the idea that if his attention were attracted by this boyish noise, Carmody would be inclined to investigate. Then the sight of those khaki suits must do the rest.

It was easy to lay out such a simple scheme as this, but it remained to be seen whether the man would take the bait, as Mr. Wainwright seemed to imagine would be the case.

"I believe that a man who has had such an extensive experience," ventured Rob, as the four of them were talking over matters, while Bill was cleaning up the breakfast dishes and cooking things, "must know more or less about delusions crazy people labor under. In that case he would be able to give a good guess what the effect of our khaki uniforms would have on this person. No matter what the result may be we have our duty laid out, and it's our business to see we carry it along the best we know how. The rest we've got to leave to luck."

"And Rob Blake!" added Tubby, softly, his

eyes beaming with affection as he surveyed the scout leader who had so often taken them through tangles to victory.

There was one thing that still bothered Rob, and he meant to speak of it before the real work of the day began. Bill was still busily employed, and as Rob drew near he was surprised to hear him humming a school air that the boy certainly could not have picked up after he found himself in the company of the tramp.

Rob commenced to hum the second part of the refrain, at which Bill smiled and nodded his head as though pleased, while he went on to say, a quiver in his voice:

"That's it. Somehow I seemed to know there *must* be a second part to that air, but it wouldn't come to me. Now I remember it," and he went on to eagerly hum it to the end.

"Do you know where you heard that song?" asked Rob. "It's in our school book of choruses. How did you happen to get the first part?"

"Why, it just seemed to come to me like a faint dream," Bill told him. "I found myself humming it, only each time I'd go back to the beginning, which way I seemed to know wasn't right, and that there was another part. But I couldn't



get it, no matter how I tried, until you gave me the clue."

"And still, now that you are able to go through with it all don't you remember anything connected with it—can't you see the scholars in school singing, with the teacher on the platform keeping time?"

Bill looked almost frightened, and his face grew ghastly white in the terrible effort he made to picture what the other was describing.

"It's no use, for no matter how much I try I can't see it!" he said, brokenly.

Rob did not press the matter, for he knew it would do no good. He changed his tactics and approached the subject from another angle.

"Now, speaking of that man you called Hank, did he ever tell you where he first ran across you, before you seemed to reach a state where you could begin to reason and speak intelligibly?"

"No," came the reply from Bill, "he always laughed at me when I asked him, and told me not to bother about it, because my past was sealed, and I was going to be his pal always."

"But there was a chance that in the contents of your pockets you might find some object that would serve as a stepping stone to lead you to



your past—a knife, a little compass such as scouts sometimes carry, a notebook, a ring, or perhaps a nickel watch—do you mean to say you found absolutely nothing?”

“I think Hank had cleaned me out of anything I may have owned, for my pockets were as empty as they could be,” replied Bill. “I often thought of that myself, and wished for a clue, no matter how small, but he wouldn’t listen to me when I begged him on my knees to help me remember. Oh! he could be so cruel and unfeeling. He always said the world owed him a good living, and he thought I could help him get it one of these days. I think he meant to give exhibitions of his power over me if ever he found the chance.”

“Well, the sooner you forget all you suffered at the hands of Hank, the better,” Rob told him. “You’re with a different kind of friends now, and they’re bound to see you through to the end. When we get back to Hampton I mean to get Judge Collens and some others interested in your case; and Bill, make up your mind that sooner or later you’re just bound to remember everything. It may come back to you like the flash of lightning in a storm. But keep trying to think all the while. Never give up hope.”

Bill clutched Rob's hand and pressed it convulsively, as he exclaimed:

"Oh! what a lucky thing I decided to follow you and your crowd, just because you were wearing the khaki I knew so well. What would have become of me if I'd just run away? Some other tramp would have taken hold of me, and made me steal, just as Hank used to do, though I always fought against it with all my might and main, because I knew it was wrong."

"To be sure you did, Bill," declared the scout, "which is proof enough that you come of the right kind of stock, if only we can get started on the trail. Make up your mind it's going to turn out all right, and while you're here in camp with us just try to feel cheerful. I want you to look a heap better than you do now when you go back to Hampton with us. You need plenty of good food. Join in with our chatter and jokes. Remember now, Bill, I give you my word as a scout that it's going to come out all right, for I just know it will!"

Bill would not have been human if he did not feel a thrill of encouragement on hearing these cheering words. Just as Rob intended, they took some of the heavy load off his aching heart. It

was in this way the scout leader hoped to assist him in remembering something that would prove to be the magical bridge leading to the shadowy shore of his lost past.

Rob now began to feel that it was time they commenced doing something toward accomplishing the object that had tempted them so far away from home. Bill's case, he fancied, could wait until later on, when they would be better prepared to undertake the task of finding a father and mother for him.

Accordingly, Rob marshaled his forces, issued his orders, and the day's business was taken up, with Merritt and Andy starting out to scour the neighborhood, as all scouts like to do.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## WANDERING IN LONESOME LAND.

When Andy and Merritt went forth that morning they had their instructions "down pat," as the former remarked several times. It was expected that they were to act as though simply exploring the vicinity of the camp, just as curious scouts might be bent on doing the very first thing after they had settled down for a stay in a new district.

In addition, Merritt carried his new little camera along with him as though he anticipated picking up a few decent pictures while on the stroll. Everything looked very natural, and the boys made it a point to shout back to the fellows left in camp as long as they could get an answer to their merry cries.

Much of this was done for a purpose. If the man they sought to find happened to be anywhere within a mile of the spot, he surely could not fail to catch the sound of their hearty calls. If his

curiosity were excited, as they hoped would be the case, he would, sooner or later, be prowling around so as to learn what this invasion of his solitude meant, and by lively boys at that.

Once they managed to arouse his interest, Rob was figuring on his wanting to make their acquaintance, owing to the magical drawing powers of those khaki suits which one and all of the scouts sported with so much pride and satisfaction.

Both Merritt and his companion were very fond of all outdoors. They really welcomed the opportunity to roam with undisguised delight. Nothing pleased the corporal of Hampton Troop more than a chance to explore some new territory which possibly the wandering feet of a Boy Scout had never before trod; though centuries back the moccasined Indian may have done his hunting amidst the primeval game preserves.

Accordingly they anticipated a joyous morning, with the air so fresh, and bearing just the faintest tinge of saltiness in the wind, for it came from the direction of the ocean.

Perhaps they had a faint hope that by some species of good luck they might be able to see the object of all this planning and tramping; certainly

neither anticipated an adventure before they rejoined their chums at the camp fire.

As Merritt afterwards remarked, when referring to the events of that particular day, sometimes it seems that things happen just as unexpectedly as a bolt of lightning might speed from the blue sky overhead, a small cloud being overlooked.

They put in some two hours' tramping, and having proven themselves good scouts in that they took their bearings frequently, they knew that at the most, when that time had elapsed, they could not be more than a couple of miles from camp.

Merritt amused himself in figuring from time to time. He would say something like this: "Now we're exactly to the northeast of the camp. It lies directly over yonder. Between us there is a series of little hills of sand, with scrub trees growing over them. A winding trail runs north and south over that part of the country, and if you followed it far enough you'd finally arrive at Riverhead on Peconic Bay."

When for the fourth time Merritt delivered himself in this positive fashion he discovered Andy chuckling, and demanded to know what

had struck the other that appeared to be so funny.

"Excuse me," Andy replied, "I'm not doubting anything you say, Merritt. I happen to know what a smart scout you are, and how you keep track of your position by means of the sun, the wind, and a heap of other things called 'accessories.' But I was saying to myself I hope your assurance is founded on a more substantial basis than that of a certain Turkish officer I was reading about a few days ago."

This immediately aroused Merritt's curiosity. He demanded to know all about it. Andy was quite willing to explain—in fact, the cunning fellow had laid his plans so that he would be compelled to tell the story.

"Let's sit down on this log, then, for a breathing spell, Merritt," he remarked. "I'm beginning to notice that my feet are getting a bit heavy. I'll spin you the little yarn, that is meant, I reckon, as a warning to all scouts to be prepared."

After they had settled down Andy continued speaking.

"Seems like once upon a time there was a French, an English and a Turkish officer sitting in a clubhouse in Constantinople, each boasting of the wonderful merits of their respective sol-



diers, and claiming that their men had been drilled so that they could be looked on as so many machines.

“In order to prove his contention, the Englishman summoned one of his attendants and gave him a note to take to the commandant, who lived a number of blocks away. Then, after the private had saluted, wheeled, and walked away, the officer sat back and commenced in imagination to follow the messenger on his course.

“‘Now he goes along to the corner of the next street—he has just reached the busy crossing, and is held up briefly by the flowing tide of travel—now he crosses and proceeds at a still faster pace—I can see him arrive at the house of the General, where he summons a porter to the door—he hands the message in, waits for the reply—turns and starts back,’ and so he followed the course of the soldier all the way, finally calling aloud:

“‘David!’ and the man entered, saluted, and reported that he had safely delivered the message, handing the Colonel the reply.

“‘Wonderful!’ said the French officer, ‘but not impossible with my men, who are the peers of any in the wide world,’ and with that he summoned

François, bidding him start to the post-office to get the mail, after which he also pretended to follow him in imagination, though doubtless keeping his eye on his watch. Sure enough, Merritt, when he finally called out 'François,' the soldier stepped into the room bearing a handful of letters he had secured at the post-office.

"Now the Turkish officer, not to be outdone, summoned Mustapha with just as much confidence as the others had shown, and gave him a commission at the tobacconist shop six blocks away, or one further than either of the others had gone, for he meant to excel both of his friends in proving the excelling training and exactness of attending to details on the part of the Turkish soldiers.

" 'Now he walks down the third block—he stops a moment to bow at the shrine on the corner where the mosque stands—he meets a comrade, and stays just long enough to pass the time of day, and wish him luck in Mohammed's name—now he has arrived at the shop—I can see him bargaining for my favorite tobacco—he has secured it and leaves the place, heading homeward.'

"And so he went on in a most interesting way until in imagination he had brought the wonder-

ful messenger straight up to the clubhouse door, when he called out in a pompous voice: 'Mustapha!' The curtain was lifted and sure enough Mustapha appeared in view.

"'My tobacco, Mustapha!' said the Turkish officer, extending his hand carelessly, as though after all this were only an everyday occurrence.

"'I haven't found my shoes yet, sir!' said the soldier. That's why I'm hoping, Merritt, your confidence won't be as misplaced as that Turkish officer's was."

Merritt could take a joke as well as any one, and he laughed heartily at Andy's story, which, it seemed, he had never heard before.

"It will certainly be the greatest day in the history of poor old Turkey," he went on to say, "providing she survives this World War, when the Boy Scout Movement lands on her shores. Twenty years from now the new Mustapha will always know where his shoes are kept, and a thousand more things that scouts are taught to remember. As the twig is inclined the tree is bent, and when scouts grow up they never forget what they learned when wearing the khaki."

It was pretty much after this free and easy fashion that the two boys chatted as they once

more started on their tramp. Merritt's design was really to pass around the camp in a half circle, coming back from the east, as they had started off in a westerly direction. In doing this he felt that he would have afforded the concealed fugitive all possible chance to learn of their presence in the vicinity.

He figured that it was now about ten o'clock, with the sun veering around so as to stand directly in the south at noon. Several times he had stopped to make an exposure when some especially attractive picture lured him with its charms, for Merritt had a touch of the artist spirit in his make-up, and was always discovering charming views, touches of nature, and glories in the sunsets that many boys, according to their dispositions, might have passed by unnoticed.

As it was an object with them to let their presence be known, even the smallest excuse was taken for sending forth peals of boyish laughter. To hear Andy shout any one would believe him in a most hilarious mood; and some people might be apt to wonder if scouts were taught to carry on in this boisterous fashion, not knowing the deep object back of it all.

So far, however, they had not made any sort

of discovery to lead them to suspect that their presence was known, or that Martin Carmody, if he heard their cries, considered it worth while to investigate. Merritt was always on the watch, cherishing a strong hope that in time they would approach his hiding-place, which Rob had been given to understand by the revenue officers was within two miles of camp.

"Seems as if we might own the whole of this lonesome country around here," Andy was remarking with a tinge of disappointment in his voice, as they stopped again, while the other "fiddled" with his camera for a short time.

"Well," observed Merritt, "for a fact we haven't run across a living soul all morning, have we? Now that you mention it, Andy, we haven't seen even a sign of a fence, or a cow, or a dog. The only sounds we've heard consisted of crows cawing, bluejays scolding, and now and then the far-away whistle of an engine on the railroad. It's a little hard to believe that some day, in the dim future, all this section up here, according to the prospectus of those real-estate sharks, will be densely populated with the overflow of Greater New York, which we know lies sixty or eighty miles away yonder. It is to laugh, when you

think how folks will fall all over themselves investing their money in sand dunes, and scrubby stretches on the jumping-off place of civilization."

Andy found occasion to "haw-haw" over this little account given in Merritt's peculiar way. In fact, Andy had about reached the point where he was ready to yell at the slightest provocation; forcing himself to appear hilarious had made him hysterical, which is no unusual happening with many young people.

All of a sudden, however, he stopped laughing, as if some one had dropped a dipper of ice-cold water down his back.

"Oh! Merritt!" he exclaimed half under his breath, and the other started. There was that in the actions of his companion to hint at a quick change in the monotonous conditions with which they had so long been confronted.

"Hello! what ails you, Andy?" he asked hastily.

"He's taken the bait, as sure as shooting!" muttered the other, pretending to be fixing the cord of his right legging, though there had been nothing the matter with it a few seconds before.

"What makes you think so?" demanded the corporal, wondering whether Andy might not be

trying to play some sort of joke on him, for there was no telling to what that merry mood of his might lead.

"I saw him peek out at us, sure I did!" Andy went on to say, and by that time the other noticed that his chum had ceased to chuckle and was becoming very grave; they had looked forward to meeting Martin Carmody for so long a time that the prospect of seeing him then and there began to appear like a big proposition in Andy's eyes.

"Tell me where, but don't point, or even nod in that quarter," commanded Merritt in his corporal voice, as Andy's superior officer.

"Gradually turn around, and act as if you meant to snap off a picture of that clump of bushes. Well, you can see something move there, and that's he, Merritt!"



## CHAPTER XIV.

## A HAPPENING IN THE SCRUB.

"I'll be jiggered if there isn't somebody hiding in those bushes, just as you say, Andy!" muttered Merritt quickly, showing that he, too, had caught a glimpse of a face partly concealed by the shrubbery.

"It must be he," continued the other, almost breathlessly. "To think that we did strike his trail. Shows what persistence will do sometimes, doesn't it? Now, do we just casually stroll over in that direction, and chatter away as if we didn't have a care in the whole wide world, eh, Merritt?"

"If we want to invite him to step out and make our acquaintance," pursued the corporal, "that ought to be our programme, I should think. Talk perfectly natural, and all about scout activities, remember, Andy. Let's be speaking of the wonderful advantages that come to a fellow when he puts on the khaki; and how once a scout his heart is always warm toward other fellows who belong to troops away from his home town. That's the



They were an ugly pair, with caps drawn low down over their brows.—Page 147



kind of stuff that ought to work with him, Rob said."

They had been carefully primed before leaving camp, for Rob was always figuring on getting the best possible results out of everything he attempted. So the pair, chatting like magpies, and with Merritt occasionally making out to look for a view that was worth taking, gradually approached the place where the big clump of bushes lay.

Several times Merritt could see a plain movement there, and once he even caught sight of a face peering out, but he dared not pay too much attention to this fact for fear of alarming the man they hoped to meet. Consequently the two walked up close to the bushes, totally unaware of how they were playing into the hands of unknown parties.

All of a sudden, without the least warning, the bushes parted, and two men sprang into view. Andy gave a low bubbling cry when he saw that escape was really cut off even had they wanted to run, for the men had immediately separated, and closed both avenues.

They were an ugly pair, with caps drawn low down over their brows, and an expression of

greed on their dark scowling faces. Besides, they carried clubs in their hands, and started to make gestures with these weapons that were suggestive of trouble in case the astonished scouts attempted to run.

Strangely enough, something flashed through the mind of Merritt just then, and with almost the same rapidity that he had often noticed the lightning play among the overhanging clouds when an electric storm threatened. He remembered reading in the local paper just a few days before how two men had been chased out of Riverhead by the citizens of that city because, while there was no positive proof against them, they were strongly suspected of setting several incendiary fires. Very likely these were the lawless individuals.

Perhaps they had been wandering about the country, almost afraid to enter any other town lest their reputation had been transmitted by telephone, and they would find every door shut against them.

If what Merritt suspected turned out to be the truth, he could easily understand how the men, feeling that every hand was raised against them, would have a "grouch" against all humanity.

If either of the boys had begun to hope that things might not prove just as bad as they looked on the surface they were speedily undeceived when one of the men started to speak.

“Good mornin’, young fellers! took a notion to drop in and see us, did ye? Mebbe now them Riverhead folks have turned out the wonderful scouts to look us up, and fetch us back to town ag’in? Run acrost some more evidence, did they, that they think’d send us to the county lockup? Well, this ain’t Riverhead, and me and my pal here ain’t goin’ to let ye go back to report what ye discovered.”

“But listen, Mister,” said Merritt quickly, for he did not like the vicious way in which the two men were swinging those cudgels back and forth, while they glared at their prisoners, “we don’t live in Riverhead at all, but in Hampton on the South Shore. We know nothing about who you are, or what happened to bother you over there. Fact is, with a bunch of our chums we’re up here on a camping trip, just to have a good time. And there’s no reason why we should bother our heads at all about your being around. We’ll gladly promise to keep mum about having met you.”

Merritt showed wisdom in saying what he did.

It certainly did not reflect upon his honor as a scout, because the two men looked like ugly customers, and there could be no telling what they might not take upon themselves to do, feeling that they had the boys in their power.

As Rob afterwards said upon receiving a report of all that had taken place, "scouts should show discretion as well as courage; and there may be times when it is to their advantage to even beat a hasty retreat, believing that the one who fights and runs away may live to fight another day."

It chanced, however, that even Merritt's diplomacy was wasted. Those fellows were not so much concerned about having their hiding-place betrayed as the fact that some good fortune had thrown a possible rich quarry into their clutches.

"That's all right, sonny," jeered the man who had only one eye, and whose face made Andy actually shiver with alarm, it seemed so filled with everything calculated to excite fear, "we ain't abotherin' any 'bout yer givin' us away. Shell out all ye got with ye, an' be mighty quick at it, d'ye hear?"

That was a plain invitation to hand over their little cash, or in other words the men meant to



rob them. Andy could be a little stubborn when he felt like it, and he rebelled against such bold thievery.

"You'll be sorry for this some day, see if you ain't," he started to say, and then as the man lifted his club with a quick motion Andy ducked back, adding: "Oh, never mind bothering hitting me! I'm not silly enough to try and resist a big chap like you. But you'll be disappointed at what you get. I fetched only a few dimes along with me, not meaning to buy anything up here, or look for a chicken or truck farm. Here's all I've got, Mister, believe me."

The man snatched the few silver coins from his extended hand with a snarl of disgust, and when Merritt failed to display much more in the way of ready cash, it became evident that the two fellows were growing very angry. They must have been building air castles while watching the boys draw gradually nearer and nearer to their hiding-place; and these hopes of being able to strike out for the city so as to enjoy some good times were all shattered when they found what a meagre result followed their robbery.

"Like as not yer keepin' a lot of the stuff back," growled the leader, savagely; "but it don't go with

us. I'll look myself and see what ye got. Recollect that if ye squirm the least bit it's agoin' to cost ye dear. Say, yer own mother never will know ye after I changes them fine looks. Now hold up an' I'll see what yer hidin' from a couple o' poor, hungry, honest craftsmen out o' a job."

Each of them started in to search every pocket the boys possessed. They found many things in those receptacles, such as boys treasure. These as a rule they threw angrily on the ground. It was money they wanted, and not coming across any made them more furious than ever.

Merritt burned with indignation at being so harshly treated. He wanted the worst kind to show resistance, and try to break away from the grasp of his persecutor; but the man was a powerful fellow, with muscles that stood out like those of a blacksmith or a prize fighter, so that the lad was almost helpless in his hands.

Andy could not contain his temper, being of a more inflammable disposition than the other. Besides, his tormentor chanced to be of less powerful build than the man who gripped Merritt, and that may have tempted the boy to make a sudden effort to break away.

He came near doing it, too, though truth to

tell Andy would never have deserted his comrade, even if he secured the chance. There was more or less struggling as the two fought. Andy managed to strike the man several times, but in the end he was forced to stop his struggles, for one of his eyes was already swelling up, and he had a dizzy feeling in his head, the result of a blow received from that cudgel.

So the search proceeded until in the end it became plain to the men that the fates were against them, since neither of the lads possessed another cent. Merritt had shown one particularly clever act—in the beginning he had flipped his little camera over into a friendly patch of weeds which concealed it from view. Neither of the men thought worth while to look it up; they could have no use for such a toy except to sell it, and that might get them into the clutches of the law.

Having knocked the boys about more or less in order to satisfy their cowardly natures, and vent their displeasure upon the objects of their disgust, one of the men seemed to hit upon a scheme that promised to pay them for their trouble.

“Hey! listen here, Petey, what’s struck me!” exclaimed the fellow who possessed but one eye.

"Why can't we hold one o' these cubs tight while the other goes back to his camp and fetches us all the grub and things he kin tote?"

"A great ijee, Sile! let's do it!" the other out-cast replied. "I'm near cavin' in, I'm that empty, an' we sure got to do somethin' right soon less we want to turn up our toes to the daisies. An' say, Sile, let this here scratch-cat be the one to do the totin' biz; hold on to that other, 'cause he's the boss of the squad."

Merritt heard this with mingled feelings of satisfaction and alarm. He was glad to know they would select him to be kept a prisoner while Andy was away. At the same time he could not but wonder what Rob Blake might think, after learning what a strange thing had happened to his chums.

Trust Rob for concocting some clever scheme whereby the pair of rascals might be outwitted at their own game. Rob had been through too much in the past not to feel himself equal to the task of getting the better of two clumsy schemers like Pete and Sile.

"There's only one objection to that plan, Mister," Merritt remarked, trying to appear cool and collected, though inwardly boiling with indigna-

tion. "Our party didn't fetch a great amount of grub along on this little hike. They might spare you some things, of course, but don't expect too much. And if my chum here comes back fetching all he can get, I hope you'll drop this thing, and let us go about our business."

The two men laughed harshly, and the one who seemed to be the leader hastened to say, with a suggestive wink toward his partner:

"Why, sure thing we will, younker. Jest let him fetch all he kin an' we'll promise to cut loose from the whole bunch o' ye, hopin' never to set eyes on a scout uniform ag'in. I hates the things, 'cause they look like what sogers wears, an' I served my two years of dog life in the army long ago. So be off now, and let me tell ye that if there's any sign of playin' us double this pal o' yers is agoin' to be the loser. Git that, do ye? Well, skip out then and hurry all ye kin."

Andy, however, developed a sudden aversion about leaving Merritt there. Although the other told him to go, and even tried to order him as his superior officer, Andy gritted his teeth, and shook his head in the negative.

"They mean to do something awful to you while I'm away, Merritt, that's what," he went

on to say, looking both alarmed and stubborn at the same time, "and I refuse to desert my chum in such a mean way. Why can't they keep me, and let you go?"

His refusal to leave aroused the anger of the two men again, so that the fellow who had been dealing with Andy once more started in to coerce the boy by making strenuous use of that wicked club he wielded. It was while this scuffle was going on, and Merritt's heart seemed in his throat, though he could not himself make a move, so firm was the grip of his captor, that without the least warning a new factor was injected into the fracas.

## CHAPTER XV.

## CLOSE TO SUCCESS.

Andy was having a pretty lively time of it, and getting the worst of the bargain, when Merritt suddenly saw, to his astonishment, that the man, called Sile by his pal, had let go of the boy, and was vigorously defending himself against a rain of savage blows delivered by a newcomer.

The unexpected appearance of this ally of the boys must have struck terror to the hearts of the two rascals. They may even have imagined, on the spur of the moment, that those Riverhead authorities, repenting of having let them go, were out in force scouring the woods in search of them.

Merritt realized that the time was ripe to break away from his captor. He made a desperate jerk, and as the man was staring at his comrade being chased by this stranger who looked so terribly fierce and full of fight, the boy easily succeeded in breaking his hold.

Then he started to shout at the top of his voice,



with the idea of adding to the consternation of the outcasts.

"Here they are, men! This way and you've got them surrounded. Hurry, and cut them off before they can run! This way everybody!"

That was the last straw on the camel's back, so to speak. The fears of the men were instantly magnified tenfold. They could, in imagination, see moving figures back of every nearby bush, while the trunks of the scrub oaks hid other foes.

Sile was not the only one demoralized by this time, for the other shared in his alarm. They shouted to each other, and as Andy had joined his voice with that of Merritt, altogether there was a volume of sound that could have been heard a mile or more away.

Sile managed to break away from the detaining clutch of the stranger, and immediately set out to show what a great sprinter he could be, running wildly through the brush and scrub, his one object being haste.

Like magic the tables had been turned, and those who but a minute before had filled the rôle of tormentors now became fugitives, in mortal fear of their lives, it seemed.

There really was no pursuit, the two boys con-

tenting themselves with whooping after the runners so as to cause them to continue their mad flight. When both men had vanished from view, and all that could be heard of their progress was a rustling of branches and the heavy thud of foot-falls, Merritt took occasion to turn his attention to the party whose coming had proved so fortunate for himself and chum.

It was Martin Carmody—Merritt had suspected that fact from the very first, simply because the chances were that no other person was to be found in all that vicinity. As soon as he came to take a second look at the man, he knew he had guessed the truth, for there was a queer expression on his face, and his eyes had a wild gleam such as Merritt had always understood might be found in the orbs of a partly-demented person.

Nevertheless, it appeared that Carmody could be fairly rational upon many subjects. Merritt had understood, from his reading, that insane people often are able to converse very intelligently on all manner of themes saving the one particular subject upon which they are “daffy.”

The man came slowly toward them. He seemed to have already forgotten all about his recent

encounter, for he was observing both lads with a penetrating stare, as though something connected with them had fascinated him.

Merritt, remembering what Mr. Wainwright had written concerning the possible magical virtues of the khaki, had no difficulty in figuring it out. Carmody had already been attracted by their uniforms. Vague memories of the past were seeping through his poor mind. Again, doubtless, he was seeing that son of his whom he loved so well, but who had been taken from him by the ruthless current of the Potomac.

"Don't say anything yet, Andy," whispered Merritt to the other close by him, "let's see what he does first."

"But it's he, isn't it, Merritt?" begged the other eagerly.

"Sure thing," came the low reply.

The man was now close up. His eyes were still riveted on Merritt, though just why he should select him, the other did not immediately guess, though the knowledge of this fact was soon forthcoming.

As the man reached them, Merritt found that it was toward his left arm those staring eyes were directing their gaze. Then, like a flash, he re-

membered something. It was the insignia of his rank that held the eager attention of Martin Carmody. His dead boy had also attained the proud distinction of being a corporal in the troop at the National Capital to which he had belonged.

A great wave of sympathy surged through the heart of the boy. He could feel for the bereaved father who had lost his all when that gallant lad gave up his life in the swollen spring torrent of the Potomac. No wonder his grief had so preyed upon Martin that, in the end, reason had fled.

Having thus guessed what especially attracted the man towards him, Merritt was not much surprised to have the other put out his trembling hand, and gently pat the sleeve bearing the totem of his right to the title of corporal.

"You, too, have attained the honor, I see," said the man, softly, as he turned his eyes toward Merritt's face, and the boy discovered that those orbs no longer held a wild, fierce glare, but were suffused with tears. "I am glad I happened to be nearby when you were in trouble. It has been a great pleasure for me to be able to assist any one who wears the khaki. Do you happen to know my boy, Adolf? It is a long time since I have seen him, but he comes to me in dreams

every night, and always looking so proud of his corporal's stripes. Somehow you remind me of him a little. Your face is good and firm and kind. I like you. Please tell me your name, and what you and your friend happen to be doing up here where there is so much danger."

He glanced suspiciously around him as he spoke, and pressed a finger on his lips, as though warning them against speaking too loud.

Merritt was wishing Rob were present. He would know best what to answer, and how to gain the consent of the insane man to accompany them to camp, which was one thing they must try and do. Still, as a scout, Merritt had long ago learned to depend upon himself at most times, and hence he proceeded to do the best possible under the circumstances.

"My name is Merritt Crawford, and this is Andy Bowles," he proceeded to explain. "We belong to a troupe of scouts at Hampton, and happen to be up here camping out. I am sorry to say that I never had the pleasure of meeting your son Adolf, but I have heard of him, sir, and that he was a clever member of his troop. We have another comrade in camp, our patrol leader, Rob Blake, who knows something about your boy and

his accomplishments. If you would only agree to accompany us I am sure he would be very glad to talk with you."

Considering the mental excitement he was laboring under, that was pretty well put for Merritt. Andy was listening and quivering with suspense, wondering what the other would say, since there could be no accounting for the freaks of one whose mind had been partly shattered by sudden grief.

Mr. Carmody tapped his forehead reflectively.

"Let me see if I have any engagement just at present that might interfere with my accompanying you to your camp?" he said seriously, just as though he fancied himself once more amidst the rush of Washington during a session of Congress. "To tell the truth I should very much like to know you better. I seem to be drawn toward any one who wears the insignia of rank of which my son is so proud. But then there are times when I have to consider my personal safety, for I am sorry to say I have bitter enemies who seek to encompass my ruin. Still, it would be a pleasant thing to meet your leader, and, as you say, he might know something of Adolf, who seems to keep aloof from me in such a strange

way, coming only under cover of night to lie down beside me. Yes, I think I might venture one brief visit."

Merritt was delighted. Once let Rob come in touch with the poor, demented man and he believed their mission would be in a fair way of reaching a successful termination. Mr. Carmody did not look at all what they had pictured him. While engaged in chasing the two rascals off he had seemed wild and fierce, but those holy memories connected with his boy had softened his features so that even Andy no longer felt any fear of him. Indeed, in his present mood he seemed most tractable, and it would have been easy for a little child to have led him.

"Let's be starting back, Merritt," suggested Andy, eagerly. "I feel as if the sooner I get something on these bruises of mine, and bathe my swollen eyes, the better it will be for me. I'd hate to go blind for the rest of our stay up here, and that's a fact. You know which way the camp lies, of course, Merritt?"

"To a fraction of a certainty," replied the other confidently. "I've kept myself informed right along. Time was when I could be lost in the woods, but once bit, twice shy with me, and it



would be a hard thing nowadays to get Merritt Crawford rattled. Are you coming along with us, Mr. Carmody?"

"Oh!" gasped Andy, for the name had seemingly slipped out without Merritt knowing it. The demented man did not seem to pay any attention to the fact. If these boys had heard of his Adolf they might also know of him; besides just at the moment he was probably thinking of something else.

"Yes, I might pay you a short visit, though I have to be back home before dark sets in, for at that time the woods are fairly full of spies. They hide behind every bush and tree watching me until I have closed the stone door of my little retreat, and lighted my fire. Besides, those two bad men might try to injure you again. I will not be answerable for the injury I may do them if they try to lay hands on the scout who wears the corporal's insignia, just as my Adolf does in his own troop."

Merritt started off without delay. He wanted to keep the man close by his side, and in order to do so tried to engage him in a desultory conversation, though it racked his ingenuity to advance suitable subjects, for Merritt had never before

found himself in the company of an insane person.

Sometimes Mr. Carmody answered his questions, and then again he would pay no attention to what was said. Occasionally he was seen to stop and look cautiously on all sides as though suspecting that those imaginary enemies he feared might be seeking to trap him. Merritt's heart fell many times, and he began to wonder whether he could succeed in coaxing the other into camp.

They had gone much more than a mile, and he felt sure that presently they would see the smoke of the fire ahead. Now and then Andy would nudge him in the side as though, in this boyish manner, he was seeking to encourage him, since words along this tabooed subject could hardly be exchanged.

It was Andy who caught the first sign of the fire beyond. He immediately and joyfully called the attention of his comrade to the fact that they were now near their destination.

Again did the man come to a sudden halt. Merritt feared that he must have changed his mind. When the other spoke he found that this was what had happened. Perhaps the sight of the

smoke dismayed the one who was hiding from those innumerable enemies whom he fancied sought to entrap him.

“After all I shall not be able to go to your camp to-day, son,” he told Merritt. “Something calls me away, but I give you my word I shall presently drop in on you to meet the leader you say may know where my Adolf hides himself,” and with that he strode away, leaving the two scouts disconsolate.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## WRESTLING WITH PHANTOMS.

"Gingersnaps and popguns! so near and yet so far! That's tough luck, Merritt!" exclaimed Andy, in the excitement of the moment making use of a favorite expression of 'Tubby.

"Hang it all!" muttered the other, scratching his head in disgust at the sudden change that had befallen his little project. "I always did hear that you never can put any dependence on a fellow who's nutty. They change their minds in a flash. I was just shaking hands with myself, thinking I had done something half-way decent, that Rob would compliment me on."

"Oh! well, after all we've got something to show for all our tramping—I have, anyway, in this discolored optic, and these bruises that make me feel as if I had been through the wars. Let's get along, and find a chance to report to Rob without any more delay. I feel the need of some soothing ointment, too, let me tell you. Whew!

that fellow did knock me around like he was beating carpets."

"Listen," said Merritt, as they once more started forward, "we don't want to talk too much while Bill is around. 'An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure,' they say, and we don't know him well enough to be sure he's all right. Anyhow, it's none of his funeral, and there's no necessity for his knowing about Martin Carmody. So be mum about it while he's hanging around."

"I'll do whatever you say, Merritt," replied Andy, "though for all that I think Bill is trustworthy enough. He doesn't look to me like a treacherous chap. But to be sure, we had better be on the safe side. You do the talking, and if any trouble comes from it you can't blame me; besides, it's the safest arrangement."

Merritt glanced back several times as though still cherishing a feeble hope that the man might again change his mind, drawn by that lure of the khaki cloth, and the magic of those corporal's stripes; but they saw nothing of him, and the camp was now close at hand.

Indeed, Tubby had already discovered them coming, and was bellowing something at them,

using his cupped hands in lieu of a better megaphone.

"Just in time to have a say in what we'll cook for dinner, boys!" they made out his message to be, which caused Andy to laugh, and remark that Tubby, in the innocence of his heart, considered that a subject of the greatest importance.

"Huh! wait till he learns what *we've* done," said Andy, thrusting out his chest in a proud fashion. "Tubby must understand that scouts are capable of better things than just laying around bothering their brains about what to cook for the next meal. I will say that he does hatch up some mighty fine dishes, and I'm far from criticizing them. There must always be some superior minds in every troop, I suppose, while others look after the common wants of the body."

Rob waved his hand to them as they approached. He was already trying to guess why both of them looked so radiant. Although Merritt and Andy endeavored to appear natural, it was utterly impossible with their hearts beating so triumphantly.

"Let's stop out here," said the corporal to Andy, "and they'll come to us, so we can talk without Bill hearing what we've got to say. He

seems to be busy about the fire, and I guess Tubby is breaking him in as assistant chef."

Accordingly he stopped and seemed to be busy-ing himself with a refractory legging-string that persisted in coming undone. Andy waited for him, and seeing his chance waved his hand toward Tubby and Rob who were watching them. The former called out something to the newcomer in camp, possibly "catching on" to Andy's little idea, and then both boys sauntered over to where the returned scouts awaited them.

"Any news, boys?" asked Tubby, hopefully, as he came up.

Andy touched his lips with his finger.

"Talk lower, can't you?" he remarked, soberly. "We don't want everybody to know all our business, remember. News did you say, Tubby? Well, I guess we've done it this time."

"What, have you seen *him* then?" gasped the fat scout, fairly quivering with delight.

"Not only seen him but talked with him," replied the other, triumphantly. "Why, we were fetching him along with us to camp, but at the very last he balked and said he had a pressing engagement, but would take the first favorable opportunity to drop in and visit us, because he



wanted to meet Rob here, and learn more about Adolf, who, you remember, was his drowned son. How's that for a little morning's job, Rob? I guess you didn't make any mistake when you deputized Merritt and me to scour the country and attract the attention of a certain party, eh?"

Rob waited for the excited boy to finish his long-winded speech. He realized that something wonderful had happened to the pair—indeed, the sad appearance of Andy proclaimed that fact most eloquently; and Rob knew that there was no hope of his hearing the particulars until Andy had exhausted his "first wind."

"Now tell us about it, Merritt," he said, turning on the other. "What happened to Andy here to give him that black eye, and all those bruises?"

"Oh! he's a sight to behold," muttered Tubby, shaking his head, "and gee whiz! it must hurt something fierce."

"I'll tell you the story in three shakes of a lamb's tail, Rob," said Merritt, and immediately plunged in to give the bare outlines of the desperate encounter with those two unprincipled men, as well as the sudden coming of Mr. Carmody on the scene.

Rob began to ask quick questions, drawing out

more particulars, while Tubby contented himself by standing there, his mouth agape, drinking in all the amazing facts that thrilled him through and through, as though they were recorded in the Baron Munchausen book he had at home. In the end it was all told, even down to the valiant struggle Andy had with the vengeful Sile, and which accounted for his painful wounds. It was a good story, modestly told.

In Tubby's eyes Andy was a great hero. While not much of a fighter himself, the fat scout could sincerely admire any one of his comrades capable of defying a bad man, and daring to wrestle with him in the effort to escape.

"Give me a chance to think it all over, boys," said the patrol leader after he had heard everything. "Later on we can decide on our plan of operations. It seems that we may have to wait for the spirit to move him to pay us that visit he promised. Meanwhile, Tubby, you can get busy with preparations for dinner, while I take Andy here in charge and try to make him feel easier."

"Wish you would, Rob," begged the injured one. "To tell the truth I'm in pain. Say, I can hardly see half-way decent out of my left eye. You'll put me under heavy obligations, Rob, if

you keep me from temporarily losing the use of that optic."

They accordingly entered camp. Bill saw that something out of the ordinary must have happened to Andy, but since they did not take the trouble to confide the facts to him he asked no questions. Bill was apparently beginning to feel a little more at home with the scouts. He showed that, while his mind was somewhat of a blank concerning his own past, at least certain things he had learned in connection with scout activities and woodcraft still clung to him. He had proved this during the morning session by helping Rob and Tubby construct a rough shelter of branches, an idea of the fat boy's, who was always looking out for comfort above everything else.

Rob had been watching Bill closely at times, though not saying anything. He was of the opinion that the boy's mind was only temporarily dazed, and that at any time something might occur calculated to lift the curtain suddenly, allowing him to remember all about the mysterious past.

This interested the patrol leader very much. He wished he only knew how to go about relieving that pressure on poor Bill's brain, so that

the boy who had been the companion and tool of a common tramp might remember enough to enable Rob to find out who his people were, and thus be instrumental in restoring the lost one to those who doubtless mourned for him.

Tubby was deeply interested in the shelter they were building, for the suggestion had really come from him, though seconded by Rob.

"You see it's a pretty hot day," he was saying as they sat around eating the meal that had been prepared, "and like as not such weather is likely to bring on one of those violent thunderstorms we have so often in late August. Now I can stand getting drenched to the bone as well as most fellows, but I don't exactly hanker after the experience. Besides, what's the use of knowing how to make a brush shelter and then just sit idle all day, so that when it does pour down you haven't got a ghost of a show. I believe in being prepared, that's my motto!"

"And one of the best ways," laughed Andy, now feeling "half-way decent" again as he had just remarked, "is to line your stomach with a good assortment of well-cooked food. You know there's an old saying that runs about this way: 'I've dined—who's afraid now?' And, Tubby,

after you've got to the stopping point, you look able to face any peril."

"Well, it was a first-class dinner, all right," observed Tubby complacently, as though that fact capped the climax with him.

Bill insisted on taking charge of things after they were through eating.

"I seem to know all about washing tin kettles and dishes," he remarked sadly, "even if there are some things that have escaped me. I couldn't have picked up any knowledge like that when I was with Hank. We never had anything but old tomato cans to heat our coffee in. We toasted bread on the ends of slivers of wood, and laid any meat we ever got on stones that had been heated in the fire. It must have been when I was a scout that I learned what I now know."

He worked as in a dream, and Rob could easily believe that the boy was constantly striving, almost fiercely, to clutch just one of those shadowy phantoms that so mockingly eluded his grasp.

The others found numerous chances to hold little talks during which they could shape their plans. These as yet were rather indefinite. They were inclined to believe that the best thing to do was to patiently bide their time, and trust to good

fortune to send the demented man into their camp. Rob was of the opinion that he could not long resist the strong temptation to visit them, and that it must be the remembrance of the magical khaki that would draw him.

"Of course," he said, as the afternoon dragged on, "if after several days have passed we see nothing of him, it will be up to us as scouts to show what we know of woodcraft, and find where his hiding-place is. From his mention of closing a rock door I already imagine it may be some sort of a cave, though mighty few such are to be found anywhere on Long Island. In fact, I have yet to see my first cave, and I've roamed over a good many square miles around this end of the island."

They felt wonderfully encouraged, however. Tubby declared that the battle was already as much as two-thirds won. He figured on Rob being easily able to twist poor Martin Carmody around his finger, once he came in contact with the demented man, for Rob had such an enticing way about him he could sometimes make friends out of enemies.

The day was by now beginning to draw near its close. The boys had all assisted Tubby work at his latest hobby, the brush shelter-tent, which

was really a roof with two sides made of thick branches, and calculated to shed water pretty fairly.

“Let me tell you,” Tubby was saying, as he busied himself once more about the fire, getting another meal in readiness, “I’ve got a hunch we’ll all be mighty glad of that Injun tent before morning comes. I head a grumbling noise off that way a bit ago—there it comes again, fellows, and as sure as you live it is distant thunder. We’re in for a storm, and mebbe a bad night of it! For once Tubby Hopkins deserves a credit mark because of his forethought in providing shelter. Don’t all try to pat me on the back at once, please.”



## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE FIERCE SUMMER STORM.

Tubby was right. His chums could easily hear the mutter of distant thunder. Many a time had they listened to such sounds with an ordinary amount of interest. That was when they were safe at home under the family roof, and could afford to defy the fury of a wild summer storm with all its attendant terrors.

It is a different matter when surrounded by the woods, with only a wretched shack made of brush to cover one's head. Every fellow became enthusiastic over the idea of doing their best to strengthen that shelter. Suggestions came thick and fast—some of them worth carrying out.

Rob worked with the rest, and altogether they managed to make a much better job of the scanty shelter than Tubby had been able to do in his clumsy fashion.

Even at its best, however, it struck Tubby as pretty flimsy. Such means of defying wind and rain somehow takes on quite a different aspect,

when the storm threatens, from what it may have seemed when fair skies hung overhead. It was easy to imagine with what a fierce whoop the unleashed elements would dart down upon the spot, and how the greedy wind would tear at the woven branches, seeking to break their hold and scatter them broadcast.

What rope the boys chanced to have along with them was used to anchor things in the best way possible. Tubby patted himself on the back many times whenever he saw that rope, for it must have been an inspiration that had caused him to pick it up before leaving home.

"Let me tell you, boys," he boasted, "a rope is often a mighty important part of the proceedings."

"They say it is in Judge Lynch's court," chuckled Andy. "Out West many a telegraph pole used to be decorated with evidences pointing that way. It's also useful for drawing up cold water from the well, leading old Dobbin to drink, hanging the family wash on once a week, and yes, in the old days they used to practice with a rope's end on the backs of sailors. Still, I'm glad you thought to fetch it along, Tubby; it may be worth its weight in gold to us campers."

Andy gave a perceptible shiver as he uttered that last sentence, and with good reason, for there had come a much louder grumble of thunder in the distance, showing that the approaching storm was making progress.

At the suggestion of Rob, they hurried supper along, thinking to have things in as compact a state as possible before being forced to face the new trouble that threatened their comfort.

If any of them gave one thought to poor Martin Carmody it was not to pity the fugitive. They believed he had his home in a cave, and surely it would offer him a secure harbor in which he could laugh at the efforts of the storm to harry him.

"Wish we had been lucky enough to locate the cave," Tubby was heard to mutter as he worked vigorously getting ready the evening meal; but the presence of Bill close by evidently prevented him from continuing the subject further.

All the time they were eating, it kept growing darker and more forbidding, though to tell the truth the time had not yet come for the sun to set. This gathering gloom was caused by the exceedingly black clouds that were creeping slowly but surely up from the southwest.

"Why, Rob, did you ever see worse looking clouds in all your life?" asked Tubby, munching away in a nervous manner, with one wary eye kept on the approaching danger and the other on his food.

"They are pretty ugly for a fact," the patrol leader admitted, "but I guess all of us have seen as bad before. We forget such things, you know, once the storm is past."

"Well, if we did," declared Andy, quickly, for he, too, felt an apprehension that they were going to have a most unpleasant experience before the dawn of another day, "it was from the windows at home, and not when out in the open, minus a tent and all decent protection."

"I admit," said Rob, "that circumstances alter cases a heap, and that things look a whole lot rougher when you're fixed like we are right now. But let's be philosophical. We can't change things a single bit by growling, and so all we have to do is to take them as they come, and make the best of it."

"That's what all scouts ought to do under any and every condition," agreed Merritt, frankly, "but it isn't an easy thing to carry out. The spirit may be willing but the flesh is weak. I've watched

a big storm many a time, and said I wouldn't budge when a crash came, but all the same I found myself giving a jump in spite of all my resolutions and gritting of teeth."

Bill listened to all this talk, though saying nothing. Possibly it was awakening some strange echo in his bewildered mind, and he may have been striving almost fiercely to grasp some shred of the truth connecting him with his shadowed past. Perhaps he had at some indistinct period heard another leader of a patrol speak as Merritt and Rob were doing, and yet could not for the life of him remember his identity—it was all so like a hazy dream.

Rob had been observing the strange boy from time to time. He was trying very hard to read what might be passing in Bill's mind. He even wondered if his name could be "Bill," which he very much doubted, for the tramp had given that to him, and in his dazed condition the boy would have answered, no matter what any one chose to call him.

"At any rate, he is afraid of thunder and lightning, it seems," Rob told himself, when he saw how desperately the lost boy shrank every time that electric flash, followed by the loud boom,

came to their ears, for the storm was by now getting desperately near.

Bill looked unearthly pale as seen in that strange light, but he had his jaws firmly set, as though grimly determined not to show the white feather, no matter how badly frightened he was.

"Yes, he's been a scout, that's dead sure," whispered Merritt to Rob shortly afterward. "Only a fellow who had been through the grind of the drill, and learned how to get a good grip on himself could face things he dreaded, and never quail. Wouldn't it be a fine thing, Rob, if somehow in the midst of the racket, while the wind and rain beat down on our heads, and the lightning and thunder played tricks around us, poor Bill should be suddenly restored to his memory? Something might do the trick, you know; I've read where a shock brought the old life suddenly back to just such people."

"If that would happen," agreed Rob, with considerable fervor, "we would be thankful to the storm for dropping in on us. I'm sure every fellow would be glad to take a good ducking, if it would do Bill the least good."

The idea advanced by ingenious Merritt seemed far-fetched and illusory, but it struck Rob as not

altogether impossible. Indeed, he also could remember reading how some near-miracle along similar lines had come to pass in connection with an unfortunate victim of aphasia, the occurrence being vouched for by reputable witnesses, including a well-known physician.

However, there was scant time to indulge in any day dreams. Reality faced them. The thunder had begun to bellow, while those dazzling flashes of lightning preceding the outbursts fairly blinded them, causing Tubby to utter a cry of alarm each time.

Yet Bill, though rigid with fear, and with his eyes seeming to be almost popping from his head, made no sound.

The wind now came tearing along in advance of the gale.

"Hold tight, everybody!" shouted Rob, knowing that the tug-of-war was at hand.

It was a critical moment. Would their frail shelter be able to hold out against that furious blast, or must it be torn from its slender hold upon the earth and scattered far and wide?

Then the shock came. Tubby had so managed it that he could make use of his weight to help hold the end of the rope that had been passed over



the top of the brush shack. He expanded his cheeks and tried by every possible means to increase the pressure so as to outwit the hungry wind that was tearing so vigorously at their flimsy shelter.

At one time it almost seemed as though they were bound to lose the battle. The entire fabric was felt to be tottering. Rob, however, managed to exercise considerable generalship, and by causing some of the others to join him in bearing down on the side toward the howling gale he succeeded in keeping the shack intact.

That was about as close a shave as Rob ever experienced at being beaten. He had almost given up hope of being able to win out when the gale slackened its efforts for a brief interval, and this enabled the scouts to obtain a fresh hold. They had encountered the worst—and won.

The rain was coming down in torrents as it nearly always does when a summer storm succeeds a sultry August day. They soon found that they were getting more or less wet, but so long as not exposed to the full fury of the storm nobody thought of uttering a single complaint. That might well up from their hearts later on when the danger point had been safely passed, and they

would once more think of their distressing condition.

Fortunately, Tubby when starting to build his shelter of brush and branches had been wise enough to ask Rob for a few preliminary directions. The latter had told him it would be wise to fashion the back of the rude primeval shack toward the southwest, since most of the storms came from that quarter in the summer time. When Rob made this prediction there had really been not the faintest sign of trouble in the western skies, but he was only going on general principles.

So it chanced that with that sloping back to help turn the water, they were saved from a general drenching. Besides this, the wind had not been able to get underneath and work its full fury; had this happened nothing could have prevented the shack from being rent into fragments, and carried away on the teeth of the gale.

It was now pitch dark. Their fire had been quickly smothered under the torrents of water that fell. Rob, with his accustomed sagacity, and scout education in addition, had been careful to hide away quite a quantity of small wood to be kept as dry as possible. With this he expected

to be able to start a fire when the gale subsided, for in all probability they would find themselves shivering with cold, and in great need of artificial heat to make them fairly comfortable again.

The minutes dragged along as Tubby believed he had never before known them to do. He wondered whether it could be approaching the hour of midnight, for it seemed to his excited mind as though he had been on guard a very long time. When, however, he came to counting sixty seconds, and realized how his imagination had been playing him a trick, he concluded that it could not be later than eight o'clock at most.

"It's dying down, Rob, I really do believe we've seen the worst of the old thing!" Tubby called out, about this time.

"Don't fool yourself, Tubby," said Andy, who was closest to the fat chum. "That's just a sly trick of the old storm to catch us off our guard. It's gathering itself together for another crack at us, that's what! Rob, am I right, or not?"

The patrol leader had been listening carefully all the while, and could by now give his comrades the benefit of his observations, which, however, were far from comforting to poor Tubby, yes, and possibly to Bill as well.

"We'll get another little siege of the storm before it quits for good," was what he said, "and it may be the toughest spell of all. There it comes now, so take a long breath and fight for all you are worth."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## MAKING THE BEST OF IT.

Once more Tubby's heart was threatening to choke him when he again felt the strain of the combat with the shrieking elements. Luckily this last violent effort on the part of the storm was of brief duration. It seemed as though Old Boreas must have exhausted his powers in that final outburst, for after being again baffled in his intention of plucking away the boys' apology for a shelter, he suddenly drew off.

"Rob, does that mean we've seen the last of the old thing?" gasped Tubby, when they could hear the wind go tearing away on the heels of the storm, and their tired muscles were not required to put out such an effort in order to keep the brush roof over their heads.

"I hope and believe so, Tubby," came the reassuring reply.

"Oh! thank goodness for that, then!" was the fervent outburst from the stout, panting com-

rade. "I'm mighty near soaked through, and chances are my bully camp blanket is in the same sad condition. How are we going to sleep to-night, I wish somebody would tell me."

"Oh! we'll get a fire started before a great while," announced Merritt, cheerfully. "Rob salted away plenty of wood for a starter, and trust scouts for knowing how to keep the blaze going after that. There are some stumps around here, and logs as well, the hearts of which will be perfectly dry."

Tubby plucked up fresh courage on hearing that.

"Then I hope it won't be a great while before we can begin to start that fire," he remarked. "Here's poor Bill shivering to beat the band. You see he hasn't got the brawn that I have, and he feels the wet and cold a lot more."

Rob wondered whether it had really been the war of the elements that made Bill show signs of alarm, or something else. It seemed to him that the way the rain fairly came down in floods might have had a whole lot to do with the strange boy's fears. This caused Rob to wonder if possibly Bill had lost his memory in just such a violent outburst as the one by which their camp had been

visited; for he seemed to show an aversion to water, and streams of the same were still rushing past in the little gullies, for the ground had a slight slope, as all camp-sites are supposed to have, for drainage purposes.

All of them waited expectantly for the last of the gale to pass by, when there would come an opportunity to build that fire by means of which they expected to dry themselves and their possessions.

If Rob had conceived any theory in that wise brain of his concerning a solution of the mystery surrounding Bill, at least he gave no hint of it to any of his companions. To tell the truth, that was hardly the time or place for indulging in romancing; they had need of conserving all their energies toward the task of bettering their material condition. The first requisite was a cheery fire.

As soon as the rain had fully stopped, Rob got busy. He was a clever fire-builder under difficulties, which Tubby could hardly claim to be; though once a blaze were started the fat scout knew various ways in which to coax it along.

Thanks to the fact that he had hidden a certain amount of kindling where the water could not



get at it, Rob found little difficulty in getting things started, and presently the gloom surrounding them was broken by cheery jets of flame that shot upward, gathering fresh force as they seized on new supplies of dry fuel.

Somehow this seemed to put an altogether different face on things. All their recent fears had taken wings with the passage of the storm, and as they began to feel the warmth of the fire they, by degrees, ceased shivering.

Ceremony was cast to the breeze, and the boys kept turning around as close to the fire as they could stand it, trying to dry first one side of their garments and then another.

"I suppose that after we feel all hunky-dory ourselves," commented Tubby, once more himself, "we can get our blankets rigged up, and take the damp feeling out of them. I never yet had to go to sleep between wet blankets, and don't want to begin that sort of thing now if I can help it."

"We might make a second blaze over here," suggested Andy, wisely. "There's plenty of wood, you know, and if one fire is good, two ought to be better."

"A bright idea, Andy," said the leader. "We'll certainly need plenty of room to stretch out the

sleeping covers. Besides, it'll help dry the interior of our shack, which will be another good thing."

So, by degrees, the boys were recovering from their recent state of gloom. Things never do look quite so bad once the worst has passed; and boys are so constituted that they can see the silver lining in the cloud as a rule. Joking and laughing at the many ridiculous things that kept occurring as they stretched their blankets in front of the fires, they brought something like order and system out of chaos. It is one of the best attributes scouts can claim that they are trained to look adversity in the face, and never flinch, always believing that conditions could be much worse than they are.

"And after this," piped up Tubby, with a vein of pride in his voice, "I'm not going to take a back seat when the rest of the fellows are boasting of what wonderful stunts they've performed in making brush shanties. Mine stood the racket, and it was a pretty severe test, if I do say it myself. Course I know the rest of you helped me make it more secure, but then it was *my* shelter all the same. Please don't take that little honor away from me, will you, fellows?"

They all promised that the brush shanty should go down in the records of the organization as the work of Tubby Hopkins. The fat scout beamed on the others when he heard them say this. It was not often he was able to make any such proud boast, and Tubby felt that he was entitled to bear his honors honestly.

None of them anticipated a very comfortable night. Do what they would, they discovered that it was next to impossible to get that damp feeling entirely out of the blankets. Besides, the coming of the storm had excited them considerably, and this condition would not be conducive to sound sleep.

"I'm afraid that I'll be dreaming of floods, and all that sort of thing," Tubby went on to say. "I bet you I'll just see swollen rivers in my sleep, and feel myself being carried away on them. If I give a whoop please excuse me, because it'll be on that account."

"Well, I hope you don't start to striking out like you were swimming, Tubby, that's all," said Andy. "You work your hands and legs like the piston rods of a locomotive when you swim, and for one I don't hanker after getting in your way if you think you're close to drowning. You ought

to tie your feet together so as to save your poor comrades from a kicking."

"I like that, Andy, and no matter what you say you'll never coax me to try such a silly stunt," jeered Tubby. "What if I got to rolling down the slope, however could I stop myself with my feet strapped up like that? If I do dream I'm struggling in the river, and start to yelling, just knock me on the back, please, and tell me it's all right, and that I'm safe on dry land."

Andy gave the promise, but the wicked gleam in his eyes seemed to say that should the occasion arise necessitating such heroic means for reassuring Tubby, his hand would be apt to descend with considerable force on the other's broad back.

Again Rob noticed that Bill shivered. Was he still feeling cold after his recent exposure, or had something the other fellows were saying touched upon that mysterious past which constantly eluded his efforts to claim it? Rob could not tell, but there was a thoughtful look in his eyes as he sat there once more looking into the leaping flames; and occasionally he would take a side glance toward Bill, smile faintly, and then nod his head just a trifle, as though satisfied that he was on the right road toward solving the enigma.

They were in no haste to retire as on some other occasions when everything lulled them towards repose. The longer they sat up the better chance of their blankets becoming fairly dry. Besides, that fire felt delicious, and none of them seemed to be desirous of deserting it.

Many subjects were brought up, for the most part having some connection with the past activities of the Eagle Patrol. Bill sat and listened as though keenly interested, as indeed what boy with any red blood in his veins would not have been when so many amazing events were mentioned as had happened to some of the scouts belonging to that particular section of Hampton Troop?

At least, the boy who had come to them in such a peculiar way was looking considerably better than when they first made his acquaintance. There were times when Rob could see an expression flit across his thin face that must have been the shadow of his old self.

"After he's been with us for a few days," Rob told himself, "I reckon he'll get more like himself, aided by decent food, and some lively chums alongside to make him laugh now and then. I wonder if his folks would know him now if they could see the poor chap. I'm also wondering if

there could be anything in that idea that seems to have gripped me. I can only wait, and watch, and hope. There, when that smile crossed his face then at Tubby's antics, Bill looked altogether different from the scared-cat we found him at first, when caught trying to raid our commissary department."

It must have been well on to midnight when they concluded that it would be foolish to stay up any longer.

"Let's do the best we can, and leave the rest," suggested Rob, as he prepared to crawl under his blanket. "We can snatch a few hours' sleep to-night, and make it up to-morrow night. That's scout tactics every time—never borrow trouble, but when it does come to you meet it half-way, and get a strangle-hold on it. So good night to you fellows; I'm for slumberland by the fast express."

There was a scramble then to get under cover. Bill, as has been said before, had been given an extra blanket they possessed, and for which the boy seemed very thankful indeed. Rob saw to it that Bill slept in the midst of the bunch; the poor fellow had suggested that as their shelter was limited in size perhaps he ought to find a place



outside somewhere, but none of them would listen to that.

"Why," said Tubby, slapping Bill on the back in that chummy way of his, "you're one of our bunch now, Bill, and it's always share and share alike with the boys of the Eagle Patrol."

Perhaps Rob may have had another object in placing Bill in the center when arranging their sleeping places. A little fear may have possessed his mind that the wanderer might take a notion to slip away while the rest slept, which he could easily do if lying on the outside. Rob did not want this to happen under any conditions. After Bill got to know them a little better this shyness would doubtless wear off, and he might not feel any desire to give them the slip.

At first it was rather hard to get to sleep, for they had been fully aroused by the energetic visit of the wild storm, even though it had done them no particular damage. By degrees, however, first one and then another commenced breathing heavily, and it seemed as though they must all be asleep.

Once Rob awakened, and was thrilled to see Bill standing outside the shelter. He raised his head and watched him eagerly, half anticipating



seeing the other start to creep away, with the intention of deserting them.

Then Rob chuckled to himself as he saw Bill stoop down and place some additional fuel on the half-dead fire. It was only a spark of his old scout training that was cropping up in Bill's soul. He, too, had waked, and feeling chilly despite the blanket around him had crawled out to perform the functions of a sentry on duty.

"Yes, everything goes to prove Bill's been a scout some time or other," Rob was telling himself as the other started to creep carefully back in his place, "and sooner or later I mean to learn just when and where, that's all!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

## TUBBY HAS AN ADVENTURE.

"Oh! is it morning at last?" Tubby broke out with as he sat up with many a grunt and groan. "I feared it would never come. Why, I think I must have lain awake nearly all the time, I was feeling so sore after my terrible exertions of holding that rope down."

Andy, also sitting up, laughed at him derisively.

"Not much you did, Tubby," he told the other. "I woke up a few times myself, and I give you my word for it you were sleeping as sweetly as a babe on each and every occasion."

"Anyway I didn't have that awful dream I was afraid of!" exclaimed Tubby, with a broad grin, "and you didn't get a chance to pound me either, did you, Andy?"

"Better luck next time," was all the other would say, as he started to crawl forth and stretch himself, to "get the kinks out," as he explained.

All were glad that dawn had come. The sky looked clear after the recent storm. The prospect of a fine day ahead of them pleased the boys considerably.

They had numerous things they had planned to do. Tubby in particular wanted to work off the "cramp" he felt in his legs, having possibly taken a little cold from his exposure to the rain.

"Tell you what I plan to do, Rob, if you don't set up any objection," he went on to say. "A little tramp will be the best thing for me, and I'd like to take a look at the country. So I'll just set out after a bit, and cover a few miles, following the course you other fellows took, which will keep me about a mile or so from camp."

"I'd like to go along with you, Tubby!" called out Andy, "only I've got another job on hand. But for goodness' sake please refrain from getting lost. We would have a fierce time locating you in this scrub."

Andy only meant to give the other a little cause for alarm; he knew very well that they could follow the trail Tubby must leave behind him, and sooner or later come upon him in the bush.

"Well, I should hope I've learned my little les-

son better than to go and lose my bearings as easy as all that, Andy," retorted the stout chum with a show of real or assumed indignation.

Perhaps the scout master did not feel quite so confident as Tubby himself, for while Rob refrained from forbidding the trip he did take occasion to talk seriously to Tubby, and managed to brush up what knowledge of woodcraft the other had learned, so that in case of an accident he would know just what to do.

"And never lose sight of the one fact, Tubby," Rob finished by saying, "which is that you've got some wide-awake pards close by. If you should find yourself wandering about, having actually lost your bearings, don't keep on pushing everlastingly ahead, for it'll only give us that much more trouble to locate you. Just sit down and take a rest, after giving the signal cry at the top of your lungs. You see, we'll pick up your trail, and come up to you."

"I'll remember, Rob, I certainly will," Tubby assured him, not a bit offended. "Say, you can depend on me to leave a nice deep trail as I go along. I'm built just right for that, you know."

Rob could not help smiling.

Merritt was busy with some work connected

with his picture taking, and Rob himself had found certain things he wanted to do, so that when Tubby started hopefully forth he went alone. Once he was in the act of asking Bill if he didn't feel like accompanying him, but happening to catch a grin on the face of Andy he closed his lips resolutely, and forebore.

"Andy's just waiting to get a knock at me," Tubby told himself, "and he'd claim that I was really timid about starting off alone, for fear something would happen. But I'll show him it isn't so. I'd be a pretty poor sort of a scout to belong to the Eagle Patrol and still get twisted up in my bearings in such a measly little woods as this Long Island scrub-oak patch. Huh! I've cut my eye-teeth, thank you. Some fellows may be tied to their mother's apron-strings, but I'm not in that class any longer—I've graduated, I have!"

Accordingly, Tubby went forth. He had carefully taken note of the position of the camp, and harkened to what Merritt told him about the character of country to be found around that particular section. As the corporal, in company with Andy, had already made a pretty fair circuit of the camp, he ought to know the ground

fairly well. Tubby was never too proud to decline information.

"I know I'll be feeling heaps better when I get back again, fellows," was his parting remark; "and you've promised to look after lunch if I'm not home in time. So here's wishing you luck, and myself a safe return."

Tubby had figured on a certain matter, without thinking how conditions had undergone a great change of late. In fact, the boy meant to see if he could play the part of trailer, and follow up the tracks left by Andy and Merritt when they took their former walk around the camp, and encountered so much adventure.

Of course, there was not the faintest sign left of their trail after that downpour of rain. Tubby laughed at his silliness in expecting to find a "working set" of tracks.

"But that doesn't matter much," he assured himself, still quite confident concerning his ability to get around. "I would have liked to say I tracked two such smart scouts as my chums are for several miles, but it isn't going to be on this junketing trip."

With that Tubby began to pay strict attention to everything around him. He had been coached

by Rob as to just when to begin to circle, and had his location points fairly well established in his mind. Besides, Tubby was determined to let nothing disturb him so as to confuse his sense of direction.

"The sun is always going to be to the south while the morning lasts," he went on to say, as though stamping that important fact indelibly on his mind. "That is, it's now in the southeast, but will work more and more southerly as the hours go by. At high noon it'll be square south. Guess I've got that down pat now, and as for the camp it lies just over yonder. I'll make it a practice to pick out the camp every little while, and prove it by figures. Then there won't be any danger of Tubby Hopkins getting left in the lurch. I guess not!"

He soon found that his legs were feeling much better, and the knowledge gave him considerable pleasure.

"I knew all they wanted was exercise," he said, triumphantly. "I've been laying around too much lately, and not getting the proper kind of exercise. 'Course I had a lively time of it last night, but then that sort of business doesn't really count, and does more harm than good. A fellow



should walk along this way, with his shoulders well back, and his arms moving with each step, his lungs taking in big breaths as he goes. My! but it does make you feel good, for a fact! I must be all of a mile away from camp, and about this time it's in order to begin to curve to the left."

He knew that this was the time he might lose his bearings unless he kept his wits about him, and accordingly Tubby began to think so hard that often he had to make a liberal use of his flaming red bandana handkerchief in order to wipe his streaming brow.

Things continued to progress in what seemed to be a proper fashion. He saw no reason for suspecting that anything was out of the way, or that he was removed more than a mile-and-a-half, at the most, from camp.

When two hours had gone by Tubby concluded he had taken all the exercise necessary, and that camp would look pretty good to him.

"Let me stop and get my bearings once for all," he observed, firmly, "and then to make a bee-line for home. I guess Andy'll quit grinning when I speak of taking a little hike around by myself after this. I'll prove to him that I can look after

Number One as well as he ever could. Here goes, then—we're off!"

He had hardly taken a dozen paces, however, than Tubby came to a sudden halt. It was not on account of any suspicion concerning his ability to reach the camp that had forced itself upon his attention, but a certain sound, or rather a series of noises that reached his ears.

"Now what in the mischief does all that racket mean?" Tubby demanded, listening earnestly. "If it didn't seem foolish to believe it I'd say there was a sportsman with a pack of dogs hunting through this scrub timber, though at this time of year that couldn't be legally done, you know. Oh! my stars! what was that I read the other day in our local sheet about some sheep-killing dogs that broke into the big estate of a millionaire, and slaughtered several of his prize merinos? Sheep-killing dogs hunt in packs sometimes, they say, and go back to their wild state. It would be a nice pickle for a fellow of my size to run across the ugly beasts, and not have even a shotgun to defend myself with. Wow! there they set out yapping again, and say, it strikes me they're getting *awful* close to this place."

Tubby was not a rash scout by any means. If

he had been armed he might have felt disposed to bid the four-footed pests defiance, and stood his ground. Since the best he could do in the way of a weapon was to snatch up a stick from the ground, which he might use as a club, he was not averse to casting jealous eyes on some of the neighboring scrub-oaks, and trying to figure just how long it might take him to scramble up into the branches in case a necessity suddenly arose.

There could no longer be any doubt about the sounds springing from several dogs, for the snapping barks ranged from a deep-throated one to a higher scale. That the animals were also rapidly approaching him was also evident from the increasing clearness of their baying. Evidently they must have struck the trail of some deer that may have passed along through that section of the woods since morning dawned, for the rain would have effectually disposed of any previous scent.

It seemed to Tubby that somehow he could remember every word he had read about those dogs going back to the savage ways of their primeval ancestors, the wolves, that had to gain a livelihood by the chase. A taste of blood, when they pulled the first sheep down, had caused them to

ignore the domestic traits of many generations and revert to the original type; since which time it was assumed that they had taken to living in the wilds, depending on their thievish propensities to secure that food which hitherto they had been content to take from the hands of their former masters.

Tubby could easily picture them as fierce animals, with red eyes, and tongues lapping from between their white fangs, just as he had seen in pictures of wolves.

"And the chances are," he told himself, "they're just about as dangerous as real wolves. They know enough not to be afraid of mankind, which a genuine wolf doesn't, because he's never associated with two-footed animals. Jiminy crickets! I do believe they're coming right now! Whee! mebbe I don't wish I was safe back there in camp again with the boys! Who'd ever think to run across anything like this within fifteen miles and less of old Hampton town?"

His fears were not without foundation, for a short time afterwards Tubby really discovered some moving object dashing through a patch of bushes, and heading in a direct line toward him.

"Oh! what a monster that dog is!" he ejacu-

lated, with a spasm of fresh alarm tugging at his wildly throbbing heart. "He must be a regular jumbo of a canine! And that other pair trailing at his heels are pretty hefty critters, too. Guess I had better be thinking of locating up there on that nice limb, where they can't get me."

Although Tubby started deliberately to carry out this scheme he quickly found that there was urgent need of haste. The leader of the wild dog pack was coming on swiftly, and might even arrive on the spot before the climbing scout managed to raise himself beyond reach of a jumping hound's teeth.

Accordingly Tubby took a fresh impetus, and succeeded in hauling his ponderous figure sufficiently high to be safe from danger when the big dog came rushing underneath the scrub-oak, and tried furiously to reach the perching boy, just as if poor Tubby had done something to arouse his fury.

## CHAPTER XX.

## TREADED BY WILD DOGS.

"No you don't, Mister Dog!" gurgled Tubby, triumphantly, as he found himself apparently safe from those glistening fangs that came so near. "That was the time you got on the spot just too late to do the grabbing act!"

He had hardly made that boast when he felt the dog's muzzle actually touch his dangling leg. Only that the stout canvas of his legging baffled the teeth of the beast, Tubby might have been dragged down from his perch.

The fat scout gave a sharp cry, and it was really ludicrous to see the activity he immediately displayed in "lofting" both legs, and then endeavoring to gain a more elevated position where he might feel safe.

When he next looked down toward the ground he was thrilled to see a trio of ugly appearing beasts sitting there, licking their chops, and glaring up at him. Besides the big leader there were





The stout canvas of his legging baffled the teeth of the beast.—Page 212





two ordinary-sized animals, but really Tubby believed he had never before seen a more terrifying bunch of four-footed creatures than the hunting pack below.

"Get along with you!" he called out angrily at first. "What d'ye mean chasing after a fellow who never lifted a finger to harm one of your kind? Why, as a rule I just love dogs, big and little, though excuse me for saying it, but not your kind. Why, I do more than half believe you're part wolf after all. Queer what a change it makes when a dog gets to running wild. He seems to forget all his good points, and tries to imitate the genuine wolf in cruelty."

Tubby whistled and tried to act as though quite indifferent. He was hoping, of course, that the pack, finding they could not get at him after much vain jumping, would sneak away into the scrub to resume their hunt for game.

As the minutes passed and they gave no sign of becoming tired, just sat and stared and growled and snarled, Tubby inwardly confessed that he was not feeling quite so "chipper" any longer.

"Say, how d'ye expect to get your dinners if you keep on wasting time sitting around here, and yapping that way at a fellow?" he again ad-

dressed the big hound, to receive in return a fierce growl, together with more frantic efforts to reach his dangling feet.

Tubby now began to have cold chills pass up and down his spinal column. Of course, the one dreadful possibility that confronted him was starvation. What if those obstinate dogs should camp there and keep him up that tree hour after hour, and day after day until the miserable end came? Poor Tubby had to take his red bandana and wipe the cold perspiration from his forehead, so terribly did the very thought work upon his feelings.

"Course, I could fix myself in a crotch," he mused, in desperation, "so I wouldn't drop down even when I became too weak to hold on any longer; but it's terrible to think of getting savage with hunger. Oh! somehow I always believed that was going to be my sad fate after all, just because I've been so fond of eating. Mebbe it's meant as a punishment for my greediness. If ever I do get safely out of this awful fix I'm going to reform, yes, I am. I promise to try my level best to keep my mind off feeding more, and think of other things more lofty."

As shouts and threats had seemed to have no

effect upon the determined animals besieging him, Tubby now changed his tactics and commenced wheedling and pleading in his softest tones. Had any of the other fellows heard him speaking to those savage brutes as softly as though they were dearly beloved pets they must have been highly amused, indeed. Tubby would not have cared for that if only he could discover some efficient means for effecting his release.

After exhausting his stock of adjectives in the form of praise, without moving the hard hearts of the growling crew below, Tubby gave that project up.

"It's no use, apparently," he muttered, disconsolately. "My fate has overtaken me, and perhaps I'm a goner. But I vow that they'll never have the pleasure of dining off Tubby Hopkins, cannibals that they are, if I have to use my bandana in tying myself to a limb up here. Whee! but this is a tough deal, I must say, and my brave chums only a mile or so away from me. Oh! gingersnaps and popguns! what a silly not to think of that before!"

From the way in which his broad face expanded in a grin it might easily be understood that Tubby had suddenly conceived a brilliant

idea, at least it was an extraordinary thought for him to originate.

He once more started to calculate his position by figuring on the sun. Then turning his face toward a certain quarter where he had decided the camp must lie, he placed his chubby hands up to form a trumpet or a megaphone, and then commenced shouting at the top of his voice.

"Help! help! help!"

He kept reiterating that one word for a full minute. Then he commenced calling the names of his three chums, Rob, Merritt and Andy in succession, after which he again sent out the call for assistance until he had to stop to recover his breath.

The trio of dogs below seemed to think he was whooping at them and took it as a personal insult, for one and all began to howl mournfully, so that altogether the racket was rather remarkable.

Tubby kept this programme up every little while. It did not hurt him even if it failed to frighten off his persecutors, and there was always a lingering hope that his voice might be heard at the distant camp.

"One good thing," Tubby told himself after

some little time had passed without any change in the conditions, "the wind is blowing toward the camp, and it seems to me one of the boys ought to have good enough hearing to catch some of my yells. Oh! dear, I'm beginning to feel that cold hand of despair gripping at my poor heart again. What else can a fellow do, I wonder?"

He could see the club he had held before starting to climb into the dwarf oak. It was lying just at the base of the tree. The mastiff smelled at it every now and then as though detecting the scent of a human hand about the stick; he even pawed at it once, but there the club still lay, tempting poor Tubby.

He gritted his teeth, while his eyes flashed as they seldom did, for Tubby was slow to anger, though once aroused he could fight valiantly.

"Anyway," he was muttering to himself in desperation, "if it does come to the very worst what's to hinder me dropping down there, seizing on to that club and starting to give 'em Hail Columbia? I bet you now I could make those beasts howl some if I got a chance to crack them. I've knocked out more than one home-run on the diamond and my muscles are anything but flabby, if they are big. And say, I'm just bound to do

that before I'll let 'em starve me to death up here. Anything but such a horrible fate for 'Tubby Hopkins!"

Still, he did not feel bound to put that last desperate plan into operation just yet. There was plenty of time, and opportunities for a change to come about in the conditions. His comrades might, in the end, hear him if only his failing voice held out. Then again, the dogs were bound to get hungry, and must hunt for food; only Tubby was sorely afraid, since they seemed to be so sagacious, that they might do this in detachments, always leaving two to guard that fatal tree.

How he strained his ears listening after every renewed set of cries! Several times he had felt a thrill of delicious anticipation as he fancied he caught some reassuring shout, only to have his spirits drop down to the zero point again when realizing that it was only some old crow calling hoarsely to his mate.

The minutes passed. Tubby thought they dragged terribly, just as always happened whenever he looked forward to the coming of the Glorious Fourth, a birthday, or the arrival of Christmas with its fine presents and good eating.



Then once again he had that same thrill pass over him. Could that have been a faint shout he heard beating up against the wind? Tubby held his hands back of his ears to assist in catching it again, and waited, while it seemed to him his very heart ceased to perform its customary functions, so intense was his interest.

Then he gave what seemed to be almost a sob of relief.

"Yes, it's the boys coming, as sure as anything!" he exclaimed in thrilling tones, while he unconsciously, as it seemed, shook hands with himself in congratulation.

Again did Tubby send out a series of excited whoops though his voice was getting painfully hoarse now from long and strained service. How gladly did he hear the answering call gradually getting louder all the time. This told him Rob and the others were coming as fast as they could, and that they had positively located his position. All the same Tubby continued to utter that cry for help at intervals until he knew the others were close enough to hear what he said if he tried to let them understand what a surprise awaited them.

"Rob, oh! Rob, answer me!" he called.

"What is the matter, Tubby?" came the reply, though as yet none of the others had appeared in sight.

"I'm treed by a pack of wild dogs, Rob!" called Tubby, frantically. "Look out for them when you come up, and keep together. Make sure you've all got hefty clubs because they're an ugly bunch, and full of fight."

"How many?" shouted Rob immediately.

"Three all told, and one a whopper," replied the prisoner of the scrub oak.

"All right. Leave it to us, Tubby, and we'll make them skip out in a hurry. You just be ready to drop down and join us when we get there. The more there are to tackle them the better. Get that, Tubby?"

Tubby answered that he did, and would gladly join forces with the rescue party. He hoped in his heart, however, that such a course might not be necessary, for already he could detect signs of growing uneasiness on the part of the three dogs.

"They've heard Rob talking, and mebbe got scent of the boys coming, though that could hardly be with the wind against them," Tubby told himself.

He was feeling much relieved; indeed, he even began to question as to whether a promise exacted under threats could be held binding. Tubby was thinking of what joy he was bound to miss if he kept his word and started cutting down his rations.

"I didn't say *when* I'd begin that business," he muttered, "and it would be a shame to just spoil my outing that way. Guess it'll be time enough if I start when I get back home again. I might make myself sick, you see, cutting down too sudden like, and when a fellow is going to meet trouble like that the best place for him is home. Yes, I'll postpone my privations until I'm safe back. Besides, we wouldn't want to either waste any of the grub we've fetched along, or lug it all the way to Hampton again."

Tubby could salve his conscience easily when his favorite subject was concerned, it seemed. Several minutes passed away and then Rob called again.

"We're coming along now, Tubby. We've all got heavy clubs and mean to use them like hot-cakes if we have to fight those wild dogs. But the chances are they'll take to their heels before we arrive."

At that the oncomers started shouting with the evident intention of alarming the animals. Tubby watched eagerly to see what effect this had. He noticed that the smaller dogs were beginning to let their tails droop, which he took was a good sign their courage must be also failing. The largest beast ran back and forth, now and then sniffing in the direction of the advancing boys. Finally he, too, must have concluded that the odds were too great. Possibly the old fear of man once more cropped up in his heart. However that might be, the trio presently slunk away, and were quickly swallowed up in the brush, greatly to Tubby's relief.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE TIME LIMIT.

Tubby hastened to descend from his perch. For one thing he was heartily tired of holding forth upon such a hard seat, and then again he disliked having Andy, who would be sure to "josh" him over the occurrence, in particular, seeing him there.

He could follow the course of the on-coming boys by their shouts. When he glimpsed their moving forms through the waving bushes Tubby took off his hat and gave them the "high sign." The fact that he was now once more on *terra firma* told Rob and the others the wild dogs must have departed, and that the coast was clear.

They soon joined Tubby, whom they found rubbing those portions of his anatomy which had suffered worst from his enforced stay aloft.

"I want to tell you I'm mighty glad you got here when you did, fellows," was the way Tubby greeted the new-comers. "Honest to goodness,

but those beasts acted as if they meant to start a regular siege, and keep me in a tree the rest of my natural life. That would have been a rough deal, because I'd surely have starved."

Just as Tubby had anticipated, the first thing skeptical Andy did was to express his doubts as to whether there had actually been any pack of wild dogs at all.

"Sure now you didn't just *dream* you saw the critters, Tubby?" he went on to say in his most sarcastic tone that fired the other's blood.

"Looky here and you'll see the marks of teeth on my legging," he told Andy severely. "If I hadn't jerked my leg up then, he'd have pulled me off that lower limb, for he could jump something fierce."

Andy looked up, shrugged his shoulders, and grinned.

"Do you really expect us to believe any sort of common dog could leap as high as that limb, Tubby Hopkins?" he continued in his exasperating way.

"No, I don't," snapped the other, "because you see this wasn't an ordinary dog at all. He was simply a buster, that's the truth, a mastiff, I should say. Why, only the other day I was read-

ing about these beasts, I think. Seems that they broke into the sheep-fold over at a rich man's estate and killed several prize merinos worth their weight in silver. There's a reward out for bringing them into camp, too, so if only I'd had a gun along I might have made a neat little sum."

Andy believed every word Tubby said, because he knew what a fine reputation for truthfulness the fat scout had. Nevertheless, feeling disposed to tease, he continued to look skeptical.

"My name isn't Thomas," he observed airily, "but all the same I was born a doubter. You'll have to show us, Tubby, before we can swallow such a whopping yarn."

"Just turn your eyes toward Rob then," he was told caustically, "and you'll soon be convinced. He took the right way of finding out, because those three wild dogs left plenty of tracks behind them."

"That's right, they did, Tubby!" called out Rob. "I can see plainly just where one of them amused himself in jumping up ever so many times. And from the tremendous size of his spoor I should say he was a very large dog, a mastiff you called him. But they ran away in the end, did they?"



"Yes, but acted as if mighty sorry to leave me," replied Tubby.

Andy now gave over playing a part, since he had had his fun with Tubby. Getting down on hands and knees he also examined the tracks left by the dogs, and seemed to be impressed. He nodded his head as in grave thought.

"We made a bad move, Rob, when we decided we'd have no need of a gun on this little trip so near the home town," he started to complain. "We all said there would be no big, wild animals to bother us, and as the law was on most game we couldn't do any hunting, even if we wanted to. But nobody ever dreamed of wild dogs. I would give something right now to have my gun along. A reward offered, too, for knocking over the sheep-killers? Too bad, too bad, it's a lost chance!"

"I feel a little that way myself," admitted Tubby. "With that pack hunting through this region, none of us will take any great pleasure in wandering off again. For one I know I've seen all I want to of the country. Laugh as much as you want, Andy Bowles, you'd feel the same way if you sat on a limb for an hour, and saw those terrible dogs showing their sharp teeth and red

tongues while they kept looking and looking up at you so hungrily!"

They were already on the way to camp while talking in this strain. Bill had apparently been left in charge at the time Tubby's faint shouts for help had been heard which started the other three off on the run "up the wind."

"Whatever did you think was the matter with me, Rob?" Tubby asked, showing that he felt more or less curiosity on this score.

"None of us seemed to be of the same mind," came the reply. "Andy said he expected you must be lost and were calling, just as I told you to do, and pocket your pride. Merritt, I think, was of the opinion that you had found out something about the man we want to get sociable with, and wanted us to come on so as to help coax him to the camp."

"But what did you think, Rob?" persisted Tubby.

"To tell you the truth, Tubby, and not meaning to hurt your feelings any, I had a strong idea you might have sprained your ankle, and found you couldn't walk. It isn't hard to do that if you try to pass along where vines hang down from the branches of trees, threatening to catch

your foot and throw you. I can remember two fellows who suffered that way, and one of them limps yet from the sprain, which is often a heap worse than a broken bone."

Tubby heaved a sigh of relief.

"What happened to me was bad enough, for a fact," he said, "but I can see how it might have been a whole lot worse. All my fun would have been spoiled if I had to just lie around camp, and eventually be carried back home on a stretcher. I've actually set eyes on those dogs, too, which is more than a good many fellows can say."

They all agreed with him.

They reached the camp without seeing or hearing anything further of the trio of wild dogs. It was almost noon by now, and Tubby mentioned something about expecting that he ought to get busy preparing a meal.

"You just squat where you are, Tubby," Andy told him firmly. "Think we'd let you make a slave of yourself after what you've been through this morning? Well, with all my liking to get a rise out of you with a joke I'm not built that way. I'll be the cook this time, and you take things easy."

So Tubby felt kindly toward Andy, who could

be most accommodating when he chose to exert himself, and very tantalizing at other times.

The rest of the day was spent quietly, the boys being content to stay near their shack shelter as a rule. Rob did wander off just once, and was gone for an hour, but when he came back he made no mention of having run across anything of particular interest, and Tubby concluded the dogs must have left that part of the country.

Rob sat with Bill for some little time, and talked in a low voice. The others could not hear what passed between them, but they could give a good guess.

"Rob's trying to run across some loophole of light that might help tell who and what Bill used to be," remarked Andy to Merritt, as they sat together with the sun nearing the western horizon, and everything seemed peaceful around them.

"And it'll be a queer thing if Rob fails to get what he's after, too, believe me," Merritt went on to say in his emphatic fashion. "Rob knows how to fish for clues; he's bound to discover something that will lead up to results. It would be a fine job if we could restore poor Bill to his folks."

"I can see Rob watching his face like a hawk

while he talks," Andy continued. "He is hoping to see something flash over it when he says a certain word. That's going to tell him he's on a warm scent. It's like the old game we used to play at parties, of hiding something, and then telling the one who seeks that he's getting hot or cold as he draws nearer or moves away from it."

If the patrol leader made any discovery, he failed to take the other three chums into his confidence. That was not Rob's way as a rule, but in a case as mysterious and baffling as the lost identity of Bill he probably felt that he had better hold his peace until more certain of his ground. It would be a shame to excite sudden, wild hopes in the breast of the lost boy that might never be fulfilled.

So the night closed in and found them feeling much more satisfied than on the preceding occasion, when the storm hung over them.

The boys were very sleepy, and bent on retiring at an early hour so as to make up for the lost rest of the previous night. Indeed, talk seemed to languish after they had eaten their supper; and Tubby continued to yawn frightfully until Andy finally begged him to take his bandana and tie it around his face.

"Honest, Tubby, I'm awfully afraid you'll dislocate your jaws with all that gaping. 'Then think what a fix you'll be in, with no chance to eat a bite, only have soft stuff like gruel poured down your throat!"

The possibility of such dire disaster overtaking him must have appalled Tubby, for after that he held his lower jaw when the desire to yawn became irresistible. They were all ready to seek their blankets by the time eight o'clock arrived, and thankful that they had dry couches upon which to throw themselves.

It turned out to be a peaceful night. Tubby may have dreamed of those wild dogs, but if so he made no outcry whatever, which was pretty good proof that in his visions he was getting the upper hand of the beasts, being possibly armed with a gun.

Andy admitted later on that he actually seemed to know nothing after his head touched the pillow-slip filled with soft moss gathered near by, until he heard the others talking, and opened his eyes to find that the dawn had come.

"Well, here's another day," he remarked, sitting up, "and I wonder what it's going to do for us."

Even Tubby knew what he meant by those words, and that actual mention of Martin Carmody was avoided because it was not as yet deemed advisable to tell Bill about the partly demented man who was hiding in the woods of that region.

"We'll wait for one more day to come," said Rob, when he had the chance to say what was on his mind, Bill having gone outside the shelter to start the fire up again for breakfast, "and then if he doesn't keep his promise to visit us here, why we'll try to locate his refuge. It's just possible that he may have been injured in the storm, and be needing help."

"Oh! do you think so, Rob?" demanded Tubby, at once experiencing a feeling of deepest sympathy in that tender heart of his, for he could easily picture the outcast lying helpless in his cave, with a broken leg, or a serious cut that needed attention.

"It is possible but not probable," Rob told him. "So we'll let another day pass before we take things in our own hands. I'd much rather the mountain came to Mahomet as they say, than that he had to go to the mountain."

"Which means that you think we'd be more



likely to meet with success if we drew him to us through the magic of the khaki suits, than if we tracked him, and mebbe got him to suspecting we meant to do him a bad turn?" Andy was saying.

"Wait and see," concluded Rob. "I don't know just how to explain the feeling I have, but I think something is going to happen before night comes again that will advance our mission, more or less. And then, besides, all of us can find lots to do this morning if we want to keep busy."

Noon came, and even the long, hot afternoon was dwindling away, but so far nothing had come to pass to verify Rob's prediction, so that even sanguine Tubby felt as if they would have to start forth on the morrow and hunt for the hiding-place of the Washington fugitive.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## POOR BILL.

Tubby kept on hoping that the prediction made by Rob might turn out to have something solid back of it. According to his mind it would be so much nicer to have Martin Carmody come to them, spurred on by his singular regard for all fellows who wore the khaki of the scouts, just because his dead boy had once taken such pride in his uniform.

Sure enough, something quite out of the ordinary run did come to pass during the afternoon, though not along the lines Tubby had been dreaming about.

It was connected with Bill.

The boys had been chattering away, especially Andy and Tubby, and as their thoughts happened to incline back toward scenes that had occurred in their checkered careers, all sorts of subjects came in for mention.

Among other things they got to discussing

music, for Tubby had quite a good voice, and was often called on to sing in public on account of the wonderful sweetness of his notes, which some people even compared with those of a celebrated Irish tenor.

"Well," remarked Andy thoughtfully, "I'm fond of music, too, though I can't sing half-way decent, not owning a voice like Tubby here. But some of these days I'm going to take lessons."

"What on, Andy? Not the horn, because you can play that pretty fine as it is?" Tubby inquired, for Andy was the chosen bugler of Hampton Troop.

"Shucks! no, what future is there for a fellow who bugles, unless he expects to be a genius, and startle the world with his cornet solos? I can't be that, but I've got music in me that wants to come out, and I'm bent on taking up the violin. I tell you I just dote on a fiddle. Whenever I hear one being played *right*, it seems to go straight down to the bottom of my heart."

"Well, now, I do seem to remember that when old Professor Tosso lived in Hampton for a season you used to haunt his cottage, and be with him heaps," admitted Tubby, showing considerable interest.

"Why, you couldn't budge me with a crow-bar whenever he got to playing that fine, dreamy stuff!" exclaimed Andy, rapturously. "I could just feel it adrawin' me and agrippin' me like everything. I used to shut my eyes and try to fancy it was I handlin' the fiddle and the bow like that. You don't know how much pleasure the idea gave me. When the old Italian professor said I had a very good set of fingers for violin playing my mind was made up; it hasn't changed to this day. Wait and see what happens. The time may come when you fellows will clap your hands like mad after Andy Bowles has made the tears come to your eyes with 'Home Sweet Home' played on the fiddle!"

"Fiddle!"

It was Bill, who, perhaps unconsciously, echoed that last word. Rob happened to be looking at the strange boy, and was thrilled to see him shaking as with some singular emotion while Andy dilated on his ambition to become a master-hand at playing the violin.

Bill was quivering all over. His eyes were staring ahead of him as though striving to see something more clearly that had assumed a shadowy form before him. His hands were clenched

so that the finger-tips dug into his palms. Rob really felt a little alarmed for fear the boy was going to have a fit.

Then something like an illumination began to flash upon his mind. It was brought about by the way Bill had said that one suggestive word, "fiddle" (as a violin is still frequently called in many places). Rob instantly came to the conclusion that just the mention of the musical instrument had found an echo in Bill's sub-consciousness; he must have known *some one* long ago who played the fiddle, and just then his anxious spirit was trying to grasp the reality so as to unroll that curtain separating him from his lost past, in order to connect it with the vital present.

Rob wanted to do anything in his power to assist poor Bill, but he hardly knew what might best suit the case. One who was accustomed to handling people suffering from a lapse of memory might have understood just how to go about it so as to gently lead the patient back step by step until he found some foundation on which to rebuild crushed remembrance; but Rob had never run across anything so perplexing in all his experience.

"Do you love a fiddle, Bill?" Rob asked, softly,

as he leaned over and put a friendly and encouraging arm about the shoulders of the other.

Bill started as though struck. He turned his eyes toward the speaker and Rob was pained to see the intense and strained expression there. Bill actually looked ten years older. When he spoke, although he evidently tried to control his voice, it quavered in spite of him.

"I don't know," he started to say, irresolutely. "I seemed to feel so queer when Andy was saying what he did about how he loved to hear a fiddle played. Yes, some time or other I must have also often listened to one. Strains seem to be running madly through my brain; but oh! I can't remember who it was, I can't remember!"

"Try and picture him standing there with his fiddle and bow," urged Andy, eagerly. "Mebbe you can see him with his handkerchief tucked under his chin to keep the wood of the violin from hurting him as he holds it in place. Then he wields the bow ever so softly, and the most delicious little trills start to come out, like birds waking up in the morning, and twittering His praise, as the old professor used to call it. Can't you seem to see something like that, Bill?"

"Yes, yes, but somehow I can't seem to get

even a glimpse of the face!" groaned the suffering boy, shaking his head, and covering his staring eyes with both hands.

"Tell me," said Rob, kindly, but with a touch of command in his voice, "is it a man or a woman you seem to see playing, Bill?"

"It is, yes, it must be—a man!" gasped the other in a tense way, while Tubby could see that the beads of perspiration were dripping down from his forehead on account of the terrible mental strain he was undergoing.

"Well, then," Rob went on to say, cheerily, "that's one point gained. The person you used to hear play the fiddle was a man. Perhaps, who knows, the first time you do really hear one played you may be able to picture his face, and then other things are bound to flash before you until you know all."

"Oh! do you really think so, Rob? It sets me wild sometimes to keep groping and groping, always in the dark, and with that tantalizing line of light where the curtains shut me in. I never can be happy until I learn the truth, never!"

"Whee! I should think not," echoed Tubby, sympathizingly. "It must be awful not to know who your folks are. But cheer up, Bill; we prom-



ised we'd see you through, and when you get to know Rob Blake better you'll understand that he generally does what he says he will."

"Well, Tubby, you certainly know how to blow other people's horns if you don't do much along that same line for yourself," laughed the patrol leader. "But as to what we mean to do, Bill has heard what we promised, and he can depend on it we'll leave no stone unturned after we get back home until we find out, some way or other, the things he most wants to know."

"Thank you again and again, Rob, and the rest of you, too!" exclaimed the stranded boy, earnestly. "I never can forget your kindness. Already it seems to be giving me new hope just to be along with you. There may be some sort of connection between my wearing this old suit of khaki and a troop I must have belonged to, away back in the past, months or years I can't tell which."

"That old khaki suit is going to have a good deal to do with our finding out the truth, for a fact," said Merritt. "We could get in touch with every troop in the country, for that matter, and have word sent along the line telling about you, and asking for the name of any member

who was known to be missing from his home. In that way I reckon we could get a clue that might bring your folks in a hurry to Hampton to see you. A sight of a familiar face, they say, is often enough to restore the mind of a victim of *aphasia*."

Tubby did not say anything. In fact, he could not trust his voice, for as he watched the play of emotions pass over the face of poor Bill, the tears had gathered in his own eyes, and he was winking violently so as to disperse the briny drops.

Somehow such signs of real comradeship seemed to do Bill untold good. In times of mental distress, when grief gnaws at the heart, the touch of a friendly hand accomplishes wonders in cheering the stricken. So that extended arm of the scout leader, lying across his shoulders, seemed to give Bill new strength and courage.

He even forced a wan smile to appear upon his thin face, as though to assure the good friends that he appreciated their efforts in his behalf, and was determined to again conquer his weakness.

"Some time it may come to me in my dreams," he went on to say, "for often I wake up under the belief that a voice is calling to me; but the

name isn't ever *Bill*, though I never seem to be able to remember what it is when I wake up. But it can't always elude me in that way, do you think, Rob?"

"Just keep on hoping, believing and trusting," he was told, "and be sure that it will turn out all right in the end. I know it, Bill! With the whole Boy Scout organization enlisted back of us to help, I'm certain we'll succeed. They call on the scouts to find any person lost in the woods or mountains, and many times success comes to the boys; so, too, they will gladly unite to find your lost people."

Then, wishing to change the subject so that Bill might recover from the shock he had just experienced, Rob started asking Merritt some question in connection with the success he was meeting along the line of photography.

Bill sat back with his hands about his knees, and seemed to be listening, though Rob felt that he heard very little of what was being said. The boy's mind undoubtedly still continued to grapple with that vital subject concerning his whole future happiness, as well as the secret of his mysterious past.

"Poor chap!" Rob was saying to himself, while

Tubby and Andy chattered away like magpies over some matter that was in dispute. "He has suffered terribly, and I do hope we will be able to bring him the peace of mind he needs so much. Wiser heads than ours may know of a way to connect the broken strands in his life. There must be some regular system used in city hospitals where these kind of cases are not so rare, I understand. Well, for the present we can only hope and wait, because nothing else can be done."

So another half-hour passed, and the sun was sinking lower toward the west. It had been a pretty good day on the whole, not so very torrid for late August, since the storm had purified the atmosphere considerably. Still, as the day wore on and the waves of heat subsided in a measure, it became much more comfortable. Tubby had already commenced to think of starting upon his duties of preparing supper, as was evidenced by his making the remark that he was glad to note it seemed to be getting a bit cooler, which fact a cook was sure to appreciate.

"Hello!" the others suddenly heard Andy exclaim, as though he had made a discovery.

"What is it?" demanded Tubby, showing signs of being more nervous than usual.

"He's managed to slip away without any of us noticing him. I mean Bill," explained Andy. "One minute I can remember seeing him still sitting there; then Tubby got me into that argument, and when I happened to look again, sure enough, Bill had disappeared!"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY AT LAST.

"I only hope," said Tubby, looking around as though desirous of discovering the absent member of the camping party near by, "Bill hasn't taken a notion to shake us. I'm getting to like him ever so much. Besides, we're meaning to do heaps for him in the way of locating his people."

Rob did not seem at all disturbed.

"Don't worry about that, 'Tubby," he told the other, "I saw him get up quietly and slip away. He even gave me a look and a nod as he went. I expect Bill is meaning to go off by himself until he can get control over his feelings, which have been considerably stirred lately, you know."

"Wasn't it queer, though, how my mention of a fiddle started him going?" asked Andy. "Sure there must have been somebody who used to play at his house. The music is gripping him yet, and any time he may begin to hum a strain that will

be just like a sunbeam bridge connecting him with his past."

"Listen to Andy getting real poetical, will you?" chuckled Tubby.

"Don't look for him to come back until supper-time," continued Rob. "He is a queer fellow, you understand, though I guess it's this terrible mystery hanging over his head that makes him so."

They fell to talking of other things until presently Tubby bestirred himself and began preparations for the evening meal. Some people seem to think that entirely too much attention is given to the subject of meals in most books for Boy-Scout readers. That shows how little they know the entrancing nature of the subject, in the mind of the average growing boy, whose appetite constantly insists upon being catered to when in camp. Indeed, eating is considered one of the chief amusements, and the subject of what to have for the next meal never grows stale. Besides, the scout is supposed to make himself acquainted with all ordinary methods of camp-cookery, so that he may prepare for himself simple dishes that will not only be appetizing but strengthening and wholesome as well.

Rob was lying back watching the fleecy, white



clouds drift past the tree-tops and possibly thinking of home when he heard Merritt give utterance to an exclamation. With poor Bill and his troubles fixed upon his mind, Rob's first thought was that the other might be hurrying back to camp to tell them some exciting news, perhaps that an inspiration had suddenly flashed across his mind, and that he was beginning to remember.

Some one was in sight. Rob caught glimpses of a moving figure advancing straight toward the camp; but it was not Bill.

"He's surely coming to us, Rob, after all!" whispered Merritt excitedly, and the patrol leader had no difficulty in understanding that his chum recognized the oncoming figure just as he had done.

Yes, it was certainly Martin Carmody, and his presence went to prove that the fears entertained by Rob concerning his having been injured in the storm must be without foundation, for he walked swiftly as though in full possession of his customary muscular powers.

Rob drew a quick breath as though preparing himself for the fray. He knew that the coming of the fugitive, whose flight from Washington

had created such uneasiness among the officials concerned in the safeguarding of the Treasury plates, meant that a new battle of wits would soon be on.

"We must be natural with him from the start, so as not to excite his suspicions," was what Rob whispered to Merritt; and acting on this suggestion the other even waved his hand in a friendly way toward the approaching man.

Mr. Carmody actually answered with a return salute. This looked encouraging, as though his feelings toward them had not taken on any change for the worse. Perhaps, in the interval that had elapsed since seeing them last, the man may have been yearning to continue their acquaintance, some hidden motive urging him on.

Tubby by this time understood that something was about to happen, for he heard his two chums speaking in low mysterious voices. Looking up from his employment he was thrilled to discover the man so close by. Fortunately Tubby did not give vent to whatever emotions he experienced on that occasion; he must have guessed that Rob did not want to make it appear at all unusual for them to have a guest drop in to visit their camp, and perhaps take a meal with them.

Andy thought the other was looking better than when last they saw him. There was a light as of expectation upon his face. It might be the desire he felt to continue his acquaintance with these wide-awake scouts had proved stronger than his natural caution, and finally forced him to let down the bars so as to seek their camp as he had partly promised to do.

Rob hastened to get upon his feet, and stepped out to meet the newcomer, extending his hand in cordial fashion.

"We're glad to see you, sir, and hope you've made up your mind to stay over so as to eat supper with us," was his manner of greeting.

He was not at all surprised to hear Mr. Carmody make an intelligent reply.

"I have been unable to resist the desire to see more of you and your fine comrades," the other started in to say, composedly. "Besides I was a little anxious to learn how you came through that storm. I should have remembered, though, that scouts are taught how to manage in such times as that, and really know a good deal better than most grown people what measures should be taken to procure shelter in a heavy rain."

"That's nice of you to pay us such a compli-

ment, Mr. Carmody," said Rob, purposely mentioning the other's name to see if it gave him anything of a start, though apparently the gentleman paid no attention to the fact. "I am sure you must have known something of scout work, or you wouldn't talk as you do."

He felt those burning eyes fastened on his face.

"Yes, I do," replied the other, taking in a deep breath that sounded almost like a sigh welling up from the depths of his heart. "I think I told you that my son used to be a scout down in Washington. He was heart and soul in the work, and had even risen to be a corporal when—he was snatched away from me so suddenly."

"You told us he was drowned, I believe, sir?" continued Rob, not that he took any pleasure in recalling those scenes to the mind of the poor man, but in the hope of winning his confidence, and thus perhaps causing him to be influenced by the advice of the boys whom he admired.

Mr. Carmody put a hand to his head, while a look of pain crept over his face.

"That is the strange part of it," he said in a low tense tone that chilled Tubby, listening to every word, though continuing to work at his

culinary duties. "Sometimes I believe that wild story, and then again it comes to me that my enemies might have stolen Adolf just to have revenge upon me. I often see them spying on me, and they are always laughing in their sleeves as if they considered that they had played a capital joke on me. I do not know which story to believe."

Rob had prevailed upon him to sit down on the log. He seemed content to remain with them, and that meant the first count had been won. By degrees they would ingratiate themselves in the favor of the demented man until he came to actually lean upon them for support.

They talked of other things, and really the visitor seemed to have a well-stocked mind, despite the handicap under which he was laboring. Merritt joined in the general conversation, showing considerable interest in what was being said. As for Tubby and Andy they often exchanged looks of wonder bordering on awe, for neither of them had ever imagined that a crazy man could do much more than rant and rave, and carry on in a wild fashion.

Once they got their heads close together and exchanged whispers.

"He's fooled us, I guess, 'Tubby," Andy observed, whimsically.

"Well, he doesn't act like a crazy man one bit, that's a fact," admitted the stout chum, rattling a frying-pan at the same time so as to further deaden the sound of his voice, for he would not wish the other to hear what he was saying for worlds.

"Still," continued Andy, adverse to giving up his former conviction entirely, "if you watch him real close you can see him look all around every once in a while, just like he expected to see some one spying on him from the brush hereabouts. I've understood that no matter how intelligent a person talks if he's insane, you'll find it out sooner or later, when it's bound to crop out."

"Then let's watch and see," suggested Tubby. "Rob knows how to handle him all right, you notice, Andy?"

"Rob's playing a game, depend on it," declared the other. "He's just meaning to lead him along with soft words, like we do a horse we've been sent out to fetch from the pasture, till he gets the halter over his head, when it'll be settled."

"And it's easy to guess what kind of talk he'll be apt to give our visitor," Tubby continued.

“Rob said that interest he displayed in the doings of scouts was going to be the means of gaining his confidence. Listen, and hear how our leader is already starting to bring up the subject, and how well he does it.”

“Huh! trust Rob for knowing what’s best to do every time,” concluded Andy, with that blind confidence in the scout master such as could only be inspired by past successful results attained by the one in question.

Indeed, that was just the line of policy which Rob had decided upon. He could easily see that it appealed to Mr. Carmody as nothing else might. The fascinating subject of the activities of those who wore the khaki was a drawing card under those peculiar circumstances. Adolf had been heart and soul in the movement, and just then, in the darkened state of his mind, Mr. Carmody lived only in the atmosphere of whatever concerned his lost son.

“Come over and see what sort of a brush shack we put up, sir,” suggested Rob a few minutes later. “If we had only known for a certainty that such a hard storm was bound to strike us we might have made it stronger; but it shed the rain pretty fairly, though the wind threatened



to carry it off several times, and would have done so only for this anchor rope here."

The visitor seemed duly impressed, for he closely examined all that had been accomplished, even asking questions as to why it had been built facing the east, and such things as that. The scout-leader felt greatly encouraged.

"Most summer storms come from some part of the west and south," Rob told him, "and you see the shack is intended to offer the most resistance on those sides. It is easily possible to build a brush shelter so that not a drop of water will get through it, no matter how hard the rain comes down, and the wind blows. We are not very proud of our work here, though it answered our purpose fairly well."

From that subject Rob went on to tell of numerous things that he and some other members of the Eagle Patrol had been fortunate enough to attempt in the past, and in many cases carry to a successful finish. If the object of the scout master was to keep the interest of Martin Carmody stirred with regard to scoutcraft, he certainly seemed to be accomplishing his end. As time passed, the questions asked by the visitor grew more and more eager and definite, and it

was evident that he was being highly entertained by what he heard.

As yet Bill had not put in an appearance; indeed, in the new interest which all of them were feeling in their latest guest, it is likely that, for the time being, Tubby and Andy, at least, had quite forgotten all about the boy with a blotted-out past.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## WHEN THE STAGE WAS SET.

Andy, sitting there, and watching as well as listening to all that was said, found a number of things to mystify him more or less. For instance, while he could easily understand just why the man should look carefully around every little while as if suspecting the presence of imaginary enemies, why should Rob also frequently give a quick glance over in a certain quarter as though he, too, felt an interest in the coming of some person—Andy did not know of any one who was apt to come unless it might be poor Bill, and surely the scout leader could not have that unimportant individual in mind.

Then Andy was interested in the adroit way Rob kept advancing the subject of scout affairs. He evidently meant to create a feeling of trust in the other's mind that pretty soon might reap its reward.

Presently they were once again speaking of

Adolf, though it had been Mr. Carmody this time who brought up the subject.

"You said he was a corporal, and wore chevrons on his sleeve like my comrade here does, I believe, sir?" ventured Rob, taking the matter up.

"Yes, and that was one of the first things that seemed to draw me to your fine chum," explained the man, as he turned and tenderly caressed the sleeve that bore the insignia of Merritt's rank. "How proud Adolf was when he showed me those for the first time. I often see his face in my dreams, and it is always lighted up with boyish enthusiasm, because he believed he was on the road to becoming a patrol leader, and his ambition flew high."

His humor changed quickly, as is always the case with those whose minds are deranged. A cloud seemed to come over the sun. Mr. Carmody frowned, and there was a steely glitter in his eyes as he looked quickly around.

"They have struck me in my most tender part, my love for my boy," he went on to say bitterly. "I could have stood almost any injury but that, and so long as Adolf remained to me, been content. But if they have hidden him away, as I sometimes suspect, and hope to force me to capit-

ulate, they must produce my son before I can consent to restore that which I have secreted where it can never be found while my lips are sealed."

That was Rob's opportunity to get in the first telling blow, and he did not fail to take advantage of the opening.

"We are telling you all our scout secrets, sir," he remarked, coaxingly, "and perhaps after a bit you may think it only fair to return the favor by bestowing your confidence on us."

Mr. Carmody started and looked uneasy. His eyes were fixed upon those of the speaker so long and steadfastly that Rob felt dubious about the success of his little plan, and feared he had perhaps been too premature.

"That sounds reasonable, I am sure," finally remarked the man, though shaking his head at the same time doubtfully. "Perhaps, some time later on when we come to know each other better, I may consent to tell you about it. But not yet, not yet. I have vowed never to disclose my secret to a living soul, and unless I felt that I was doing right I could not lightly break that solemn promise made to myself in memory of Adolf, you know. Give me time to think it over."

Rob dared continue the subject no further. He believed, however, that he had made a good beginning, and was thrilled with the growing anticipation that he might induce the other to confess where he had hidden those precious plates belonging to the National Government.

From one subject they advanced to another. As the odors of supper commenced to permeate the air around the camp, the visitor was noticed to sniff expectantly, as though the appetizing smell appealed to his hunger.

"I wouldn't be surprised now," Tubby told himself, on noting this significant fact, "but that the poor old chap hasn't eaten a half-way decent meal for a coon's age. Bet he's lived from hand to mouth on canned stuff he may have bought at some village store, and devoured stone cold as often as not. Well, after he's got one of *my* suppers located, he'll be feeling more like a civilized human being than ever. There's no telling what effect it may have on him loosening up. Everybody always feels better after dining. I know that if I want any favor from my daddy I've learned not to mention the subject until he leaves the table, and lights a cigar in his den."

All of which side talk, meant only for his own

consumption, proved that the stout boy was something of a young philosopher, which fact might be looked on as another feather in his cap as a scout is taught to think for himself.

"You've concluded to accept our invitation, I hope, sir," Rob was saying, "and stay by our fire long enough to try one of our meals? Camp-cooking is part of a scout's education, you know, and he learns heaps of things no boy could ever pick up at home. There is the subject of first aid to the injured, in which I imagine you will be interested, sir."

"Thank you very much for the invitation," said the visitor, "and, although it may be injudicious for me to be abroad in the woods after night sets in, really with all those tempting odors stealing around, your cook has made it impossible for me to decline. Yes, I will gladly sit with you and partake of your hospitality, though I fear my thoughts will only too often go back to other scenes like this in which Adolf must have taken part. I shall be picturing him in your corporal here much of the time, and trying to forget the truth."

"Was Adolf as tall a boy as my chum Merritt?" asked Rob, just as though he might have some



object back of the seemingly simple remark, though if so it did not appear on the surface.

Mr. Carmody looked at the corporal and shook his head, while a faint smile crept about the corners of his mouth, so tinged with sadness that Tubby gave a gulp to control his feelings.

"Oh! no, Adolf was much shorter than your friend," the gentleman replied. "He was also less healthy with regard to color, and in truth it was partly in the expectation that more outdoor life might be beneficial to my son that, in the beginning, I agreed to his joining the scouts. There was a great change coming over his health, too, proving that even if boys gained in no other way than sounder lungs and digestion by camping, and following the rules of the scouts, there would always be a good excuse for the existence of the organization."

Even Tubby grinned at hearing that. Evidently Mr. Carmody was a firm believer in the ability of the one who donned the khaki to rise to higher levels, and fit himself to become a much better citizen of the republic than if he had never felt the call to become a scout.

"I wonder why Bill doesn't show up?" remarked Andy just then.

"Why, yes, supper's about all ready, and he'll have to take the left-overs if he doesn't come along soon," continued Tubby, as though in his opinion that might be deemed a serious infliction, though the average boy would not mind a particle, always providing the "leavings" proved of sufficient quantity to fill the gap.

"Who may Bill be; I don't remember hearing you mention that there was a fifth member of your party along?" asked the visitor.

Andy had even opened his mouth to explain when he caught a warning gesture from Rob, accompanied with a swift movement of the hand to indicate that the scout leader would tell all that seemed necessary concerning Bill.

"Why, Bill is a boy we have met since coming up here, sir," he observed, without any display of unusual interest. "He had been attached to a tramp who was treating him cruelly, but we expect to take him to Hampton with us, and get him back to his own folks later on."

"You mean by that he ran away from home, I suppose," asked Mr. Carmody, "and fell in with bad men on the road? Oh! that has been the sad experience of many boys, who learn when it is too late that the troubles they thought they had

under the home roof are as nothing compared with those that meet them out in the cold world. I am pleased to hear you say you mean to befriend the poor boy. My heart is always in sympathy with lads who have made a mistake, and wish to remedy the same. How do I know but what Adolf has been thrust into the midst of an unfeeling world by those who would injure me?"

"You will meet Bill when he comes back to camp, sir," said Rob, hastily—"most any time now. The poor fellow is suffering, and I think he went off by himself so as to try and remember something he has forgotten, and which continually eludes him."

"How strange," remarked Mr. Carmody, "that both of us should be suffering on account of things that have happened in our past; but with me it is the other way, for I cannot *forget*, no matter how hard I try."

"Supper is served, so please take your places!" announced Tubby, breaking in at a very important point, much to Rob's chagrin.

However, he was greatly encouraged as far as he had gone, and felt the thrill of anticipated victory. His comrades not knowing what a won-

derful thing Rob had been hugging to his heart might not understand why he should feel so triumphant and expectant, but they could at least see from his looks that the scout master was satisfied things were working smoothly, which was just as far as any of them could penetrate. When the shock came, therefore, possibly it would prove to be all the more severe on account of this lack of suspicion.

A rude but serviceable table had been fashioned for use during their stay in camp, and about this they gathered. Little the boys cared for any lack of chairs, a convenient log answering all purposes just as well as the best mahogany upholstered-in-leather dining chairs ever built. With ravenous appetites, and the table filled with good things to eat, why bother about such a silly thing as "style"?

Mr. Carmody observed everything with growing interest. His liking for the scouts and their simple but effective ways for doing things was evidently expanding continually. Tubby believed that here was a visitor who would surely appreciate that camp supper to the limit. He tried to imagine himself living in a half-savage state for weeks and perhaps months, content to subsist on

"canned stuff" and at that without even bothering heating the contents. It was simply appalling to Tubby, and he felt greatly pleased over being able to offer the poor gentleman a decent meal.

There was one place left vacant, which Bill would be expected to fill when he chose to make his appearance. Rob had taken it upon himself to see that their guest sat exactly opposite this empty place. He had an object in so doing, although none of the others suspected anything.

"We've only got condensed milk for the coffee, sir, though it isn't the sweetened kind," Tubby started in to explain as he poured the first cup for the guest.

"As I take mine plain, without the fixings, son, that will make no difference at all to me, thank you," Mr. Carmody assured him.

Tubby's heart swelled with pleasure when he saw the look of happiness creep over the face of the visitor as he took his first sup of the nectar from his tin cup. It must indeed have stirred up recollections of times in the past when he lived like a civilized being under a roof, and was not hiding in the woods after the fashion of a fugitive from Justice, or a wild animal.

"He likes it, seems to me," Tubby was mutter-

ing to himself, "and I just guess he'll enjoy this fried bacon, and potatoes with onions, too. Nothing can ever take the place of an onion in camp, unless it's two of the same, for they say that in onion there is strength. Hello! here's the straggler come back at last. I rather reckon Bill will be some surprised to find that we have company to supper."

Rob had discovered Bill's approaching figure, and he caught his breath as though under the belief that some sort of crisis was at hand.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE WONDERFUL REVELATION.

Bill did not immediately come over to where the others were sitting at the rude camp table. He seemed to hang back somehow, and fussed around in the way a boy might when laboring under some doubt as to whether his company will be agreeable or not.

Bill must have before now discovered that there were five gathered at the supper table, counting Tubby, the chef, and this would tell him they had a visitor in camp. As we happen to know, Bill was more than ordinarily shy because of the disability under which he chanced to be laboring at the time. When a fellow is placed in a cruel position so that he cannot even tell who his father and mother have been, he naturally shrinks from meeting strangers who may be pitying him if they have learned a few of the facts connected with his broken thread of memory.

Even Tubby noticed this reluctance on the part



of the other to come forward, for in his bluff and cheery way he called out:

“Hey, Bill, plenty of room for you here still, so come along. I’ve made sure to save you a share of the grub. Now hit up the trail to the mess table, Bill, while the going is good. We haven’t got so far along yet but that you can catch up.”

Accordingly, Bill presently came along, trying to avoid notice as he crept into the place that had been left for him. He kept his head down as though shrinking from the scrutiny of the stranger’s eyes, poor fellow.

Mr. Carmody shot a curious look in his direction, but at the time Merritt was explaining some interesting phase of scout work, and entered into it with so much zeal that he had the attention of the gentleman pretty well secured.

Rob had stopped eating. He was sitting there waiting with a delicious thrill of expectancy passing all over him, though he very well knew that after all there was nothing positive connected with the astonishing theory he had formed in that active brain of his.

Tubby had hastened to pour out a cup of coffee which he passed to Bill. Then he commenced

heaping up a pannikin with some of the contents of the big frying-pan, and no one could ever accuse Tubby Hopkins with being niggardly when helping serve dishes that he had had the honor to superintend in the cooking.

How those seconds dragged to anxious Rob. He could not remember ever noticing how time can be weighted with lead, at least in the same proportion that struck him then and there.

Merritt was his favorite chum, and as a rule Bob delighted to hear the worthy corporal tell a story, or explain some point in scout ethics; but just then it appeared to Rob as though Merritt was the most long-winded fellow he had ever known. His voice seemed to drawl along in a most monotonous fashion, as though he took pleasure in recounting the most minute detail connected with the event he happened to be describing. Would he ever finish so that something Rob was anticipating with such a lively show of expectation might have a chance to develop?

Tubby had placed the heaped-up pannikin on the knees of Bill, and was telling him in low tones that it was the "stuff that'll stick to your ribs, Bill, and I reckon add half a pound to your weight in the bargain."

Then Merritt reached the end of his description, saying:

“Now that’s the way scouts fight forest fires, establish a field hospital in cases of emergency, and save people whose lives are threatened by sudden floods. Lots of thinking folks in the big U. S. of America believe the organization has already done ten times more good for the rising generation of boys than all other agencies that have up to now been started for their uplift. I feel sure you’ll agree with them, Mr. Carmody.”

There, that mention of a name ought to be the first signal whistle to indicate that the campaign which Rob had been trying to engineer was on. He was trying to watch both Bill and the visitor at the camp table, and first of all he saw the boy give a tremendous start so that he almost upset the pannikin of food he was transferring from his knees to the table in front of him.

At the same time he raised his face. Rob could see his staring eyes instantly fastened upon the man opposite. They were wide open, and looked as though ready to jump from their sockets.

A name had struck the closed door of Bill’s “memory house” with a thud, and given the chains that held it fast shut a severe wrench. Rob

felt sure of that, and he held his very breath while waiting a brief space of time to see what would follow.

Merritt, never so much as dreaming that a tremendous crisis was impending so close by, and being deeply in earnest with regard to what he had been explaining, leaned forward as he waited for Mr. Carmody to reply. The strange gentleman, while laboring under delusions with regard to certain things, as has been said before, could converse as intelligently on all other subjects as any one, nor would it be suspected for some time that he was mentally unbalanced.

Held by Merritt's eager face, he proceeded to thank him for painting such a glowing mental picture of a Boy Scout's usefulness to the community at large, and especially the gain to the whole country on account of his increased sense of responsibility, so rarely found in growing lads.

"It has been a great pleasure for me to be with you and your friends," he finished warmly. "I hope to see more of you while you are staying here, unless those miserable spies who dog my footsteps prevent me from coming again. They do not join with me in my admiration for your noble order. Indeed, I am strongly of the opin-

ion that it was through them I lost my own boy, who so proudly bore the insignia of a corporal on his sleeve."

Rob, keeping those eyes of his riveted on Bill, had seen a wonderful look flash like lightning across his excited face as he heard the first tone of Mr. Carmody's mellow voice. Never so long as he lived would Rob forget that expression, for it seemed to run the whole gamut of human feeling from despair to intense joy.

Bill was slowly rising from his seat on the log, his eyes still fixed on the face opposite. Tubby had by this time begun to notice the peculiar actions of the other, and was looking at him aghast. No doubt, Tubby, in the innocence of his guileless heart, immediately leaped to the conclusion that the boy who had lost his memory must now have actually gone out of his mind, which would account for that peculiar look on his countenance; and Tubby may also have been seriously debating in his slow mental fashion whether it was his duty to hurl himself upon Bill so as to pin him down before he did anything wicked.

Now, Bill had pushed himself back from the table and risen to his feet. He started to pass

around back of Andy and Merritt, who began to take notice of his remarkable actions, and twisted themselves around to see what he meant to do.

Mr. Carmody himself had also become aware that something odd was taking place, for he, too, was staring at Bill, who continued to glide along until he had come close up to the sitting gentleman.

Then, just as Rob had been hoping with all his heart and soul, Bill suddenly raised both hands, seized upon the other, and, giving one look at close quarters, shrieked out one word:

“Father!”

Then the boy, overcome with the floodtide of recollections that must have overwhelmed his suddenly restored memory, fell over in a heap in the gentleman’s arms.

Poor Mr. Carmody hardly knew what to do, for his malady was such that it could not be remedied so quickly as that of the boy. He commenced stroking Bill’s face tenderly, while the scalding tears ran down his cheeks, and all the while they could hear him saying:

“Adolf, my boy Adolf, and found at last! Then they did not put him to death to torture me, but

have kept him hidden all this while. He has escaped, and come back to me again, just as I so often dreamed. My Adolf, my poor boy!"

Rob allowed himself to breathe freely again. His had been a case of suspended animation for almost the last full minute, such was the intense interest he felt in what was going on.

If the scout master, who had suspected the amazing truth, was almost overcome in this way, it can easily be understood that Tubby, Andy, and Merritt were for the moment, as Andy afterwards declared, "simply paralyzed."

They sat or stood there as they happened to be at the last second, staring mutely at the wonderful transformation picture before them, unable to utter a single word. It was really too tremendous a surprise for them to grasp all at once. Tubby began to rub his eyes, which may have been because he labored under the suspicion that he must be asleep and was dreaming all this; or, on the other hand, it would not be amiss to believe that he felt a suspicious moisture beginning to blot out his sight, and Tubby did not like to be seen shedding tears like a silly girl overcome with emotion.

Merritt was the first of the astounded trio to



recover his senses. His whirling upon Rob was, a pretty good sign that he understood the other was far from being as astonished as the rest at this remarkable happening. Merritt must have just then remembered how careful Rob had been to fix a place for Bill exactly opposite where the guest was to be seated, and this told Merritt the story.

"Rob," he started to say, in a voice that trembled with excitement, "you were on to this game, so own up!"

The scout leader smiled a little proudly, as he felt he had a right to do.

"Well, I admit that a short time ago a sudden light began to break in on me," he confessed, "but it was so dazzling, and at first seemed so unreasonable, that I just made up my mind I wouldn't try to talk it over with the rest of you fellows, but work it out alone. If it fell through, as I was afraid it must, there would be little harm done, and nobody the wiser."

"But it didn't fail you, Rob!" cried Andy jubilantly. "My stars! when does anything get past you, I'd like to know? To think you even guessed that Bill here, who had lost his mind in some mysterious way, was the boy Adolf that was be-

lieved to be drowned in the Potomac last spring. How did you do it, Rob?"

"Please open up and elucidate, Rob!" begged Tubby, whose eyes were glowing with unusual brightness.

Even Mr. Carmody seemed to be deeply interested in what they were saying, for as he continued to gently stroke Bill's white face he listened eagerly. It might be some of the vague phantoms that had been haunting his shadowed mind since his affliction were beginning to get ready to vanish, for with the coming of this new-born joy they could not long hold the fort there.

"I'll tell you what gave me my first real suspicion, though I laughed at the idea as ridiculous, and put it away from me, only to have it come back, knocking at my reason's den until I just had to let it in."

He bent forward and touched Merritt's sleeve.

"It was the corporal's insignia that did it," Rob continued frankly. "I could plainly see where Bill had also worn the same mark of rank, showing that he, too, had been a corporal. Then, you remember, Mr. Carmody here was telling us that Adolf had reached that non-commissioned officer's rank, and how proud he felt when his sleeve

was decorated with the evidence of his rise from the ranks. One thing led to another, until wild hopes began to grip me in spite of the possible absurdity of the whole thing. Then came this lucky strike when the truth was made known."

"Rob," said Tubby impressively, "you've done some fine things in the past, but let me tell you right here that bringing this poor boy and his father together again is the best stunt of your whole life as a scout, and the other fellows will bear me out when I say that."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## LOOKING BACKWARD

"Let's postpone explanations for a bit," said the scout leader. "Bill has fainted for sheer joy. He ought to be brought around so he can begin to remember a thousand things that have been locked up in that closed brain of his."

"Whee! I'm just nearly crazy to learn how it all came about," observed Andy. "He was believed to have been drowned in the Potomac, and yet, later on, found himself in the company of that tramp. It's sure a deep mystery."

"And one that perhaps may never be fully explained," Merritt declared. Rob went to get some cold water to sprinkle on the face of the boy whom sudden joy had caused to swoon. "You remember he said all he knew was that one day he seemed to wake up from a strange sleep, and found the tramp bending over him. Also how Hank sometimes boasted that he had saved Bill's life. I reckon now he may have pulled him out

of the river some way or other, after the boy had struck his head against a stone, and in a queer way lost his memory. 'That's as near a guess as I can make in a hurry.'

And, indeed, it was about as close as any of them could get to the actual truth. Even when the boy was brought back to himself he could not seem to explain the gap that existed between the time he went in swimming and his coming to and finding himself in Hank's charge, with every tangible evidence of his past blotted out by a black pall.

Adolf was himself again when he opened his eyes. He looked up into the face of Mr. Carmody as though he believed at first he must be at home, and had either passed through a spell of severe sickness or had the nightmare, usually arising from overeating.

He could now remember everything that had before been lost to him, and a more astonished and puzzled boy it would have been difficult to find when they told him about his latest exploits, for, strangely enough, it was these now that appeared hazy in his mind.

Though at the time it seemed so strange to the four chums, Rob afterwards learned that similar

strange lapses of memory were of frequent occurrence.

Men have been known to suddenly vanish from their accustomed haunts and be lost to relatives and friends for years, it may be. Then through some sudden shock they are brought once more face to face with their former life.

Rob also learned that it was not at all unusual for these unfortunate parties to have the immediate past blotted out, so that they could hardly bring themselves to believe they were hearing the truth when told of their more recent life.

Bill the tramp, or Adolf as we must call the young fellow from this time on, had been indeed fortunate to come across the four scouts just at this crisis in his affairs.

All of the boys liked him from the start, and to Tubby's warm nature his forlorn condition had appealed very strongly.

Indeed, it seemed as though Tubby could not think of anything else. Their own adventures of the past, numerous though these had been, paled into insignificance beside the one amazing fact that during all these weeks and months Adolf had been wandering over the country in company with Hank, the Weary Willie, and never once

knowing that he had ever been anything but a tramp.

Even while Tubby bestirred himself over the fire in getting supper ready he was so full of the absorbing subject that whenever Rob, Andy or Merritt chanced to come around in order to see if he needed any assistance, he would burst out with some question.

"Listen, Rob," he remarked to the scout leader at one time, "do you really think that all this time he never once had the curtain drawn back, so that he caught a glimpse of his other life?"

Rob smiled as he went on to reply:

"Your question reminds me, Tubby, that you must have been busy at the fire here, as always, scheming to surprise us with a new dish, when Adolf was trying to tell us about that very thing."

Tubby, of course, immediately suspended operations and stood there expectantly, the coffee pot held in one hand, for it had threatened to boil over, and he had snatched it off the fire just in the nick of time.

"Then of course you're meaning to explain to me right now, Rob?" he went on to say in a most eager tone. "I don't know when I've been so intensely interested in any fellow as I am right



now in Bill—I mean Adolf. It's just awful to think of him wandering all over and his mind a blank. But please go and tell me what he said."

Tubby evidently would never be satisfied until his wish was granted. He was a very obstinate boy, or at least possessed of considerable determination.

Rob, however, was only too willing to oblige the good-natured chum. He felt the same deep interest in everything connected with Adolf's past that Tubby confessed to.

"Merritt put the question straight to him, you see, 'Tubby,' the scout leader went on to explain. "It was really pitiful to watch the look of pain that crept over Adolf's face. The flush left it again, and he looked as white and sad as we knew him before."

"But why should he?" asked Tubby.

"He told us that a spasm of the old bitterness seemed to have come back just then and gripped his aching heart. You see, in dreams Adolf must have been carried back somehow into the dim past. He was constantly trying to grasp something that kept just beyond the range of his fingers."

Tubby heaved a heavy sigh.

"Whew! I don't wonder, then, the poor fellow looked so like a ghost, Rob!" he exclaimed, casting a sympathetic glance over to where the object of their conversation sat, talking with Merritt and Andy, while Mr. Carmody listened and watched the animated face of the boy who had been restored to him almost as by a miracle.

"You see," continued the scout leader, "what he was trying to clutch was the key that he believed would unlock the door of the room in which his darkened past was hidden. I guess he must have groaned many a time when he struggled with all his might, but in vain, to get just a clue to that lost past."

"Poor chap!" muttered Tubby, again snatching the coffee pot from the fire just in time to prevent a loss of some of its precious contents.

"The tears ran down his cheeks," Rob went on to say, "as he told how many a time after one of these nightly mental struggles his forehead would be covered with a cold sweat, and he found himself shaking all over just as if he had the fever and ague."

"Thank goodness," said Tubby, always seeing the rainbow in the heavens, "it's all over with

now, and let's hope the poor fellow will have only clear sailing ahead of him from now on."

"Oh, so far as Adolf is concerned there's going to be no particular trouble," Rob observed in his confident way. "Each day from now on ought to see him remembering more and more of the past life. I imagine a chance word will open up new recollections. Here a bit of woodland or a running stream will recall some favorite section of country down along the Potomac, where he used to go camping or fishing or swimming."

"But, Rob, how about the other?" asked Tubby, unconsciously lowering his voice.

"I'm not quite so certain about Mr. Carmody," admitted the scout leader. "You see, his troubles drove him pretty close to the border of insanity. He imagined things, or was possessed of hallucinations, as they call it. He even believed the Government had stolen his boy, and in revenge he carried off those precious plates. But I have hopes it will all come out right. Now I'll let you finish cooking supper, Tubby, for I want to ask Adolf some questions on my own hook."

Long did they talk, for scores of eager ques-

tions had to be asked, and answered when possible. Supper grew cold in the waiting, so that eventually Tubby had to put coffee and solids on the fire again before any one thought of eating.

Already it could be seen that Mr. Carmody was getting more like himself. Occasionally he would put a hand up to his head, as though he felt a numbness or a pain there. Rob could even see a vacant expression pass over his face. But on each occasion a glance toward the flushed countenance of Adolf, now seeming like a different person from the pale, dejected lad they had recently known, would cause his father to smile and look happy again.

Rob was sensible enough to believe the assurance that he had found his lost boy again would by degrees work a miracle in the case of the partly demented man, so that he might again resume his place in society, mentally sound. Yet, it was possible his recovery might not be complete.

Rob was holding something back. He did not wish to act too prematurely, for fear of spoiling everything. When the time was ripe, and Mr. Carmody seemed to have recovered from his mental delusions fairly well, Rob had a very

important matter to talk over with the gentleman.

It must not be forgotten that the scouts had started forth upon this latest hike under sealed orders, and that they were commissioned by the Government to attempt the recovery of certain valuable plates which Mr. Carmody had carried away with him in his sudden flight, under the delusion that by so doing he could injure the imaginary enemies whom he believed were tormenting him.

Later on, that evening, Merritt took occasion to draw Rob aside. The others were still clustered near the fire, and both Adolf and his father found many things to talk about connected with the happy past, which life they expected to take up once more on returning to Washington.

Adolf had his arm over 'Tubby's shoulder, for he seemed to have taken a great fancy to the stout chum, as indeed who would not, since Tubby radiated good nature in every line of his round face? ·

"Rob," said Merritt, "now that we've met with such a bully ending to our search, and made good friends with Mr. Carmody, what are you intending to do about that serious business you were en-

trusted with, meaning the recovery of the missing plates?"

"Well, there's no great hurry," spoke up the other, as though he had it all mapped out in his mind, which doubtless was the truth. "We can stay here some days yet, and I'd rather wait to see if he thinks of it himself. Of course, after the first excitement wears away he's bound to be figuring out what he has done all this time he's been in hiding, and I'm hoping a recollection of those plates will dawn upon him. But if he doesn't speak of them up to the day before the one on which we plan to go back to Hampton, why, I will mention the subject in a nice way, and ask him to locate them for us."

"Meantime," suggested Merritt, cautiously looking over to the group near the fire, "we might keep a watch on him during the nights, to make sure he doesn't slip away and do something to the plates. There's no telling what might enter into the head of a person who has once been loony."

"Depend on it, I'm taking no chances," Rob informed him, "though at the same time I don't really believe we need fear any trouble like that. I think that when once I explain to him how

Mr. Wainwright has entrusted us with this important mission, and also show him what he wrote about there being no intention of holding him responsible for his act, as they understood he was not of sound mind when he did the thing, why, I fully believe Mr. Carmody will hasten to put the plates into our hands."

"Well, considering what an important part you had in bringing about the reunion between himself and his boy," said Merritt positively, "I don't see how he could hold out when you ask that little favor. In his new state of mind, he'll likely be feeling ashamed of what he's done, and be only too anxious to make amends. He says he has ample means, and need not take up work again for the Government if it is unpleasant for him."

They talked of other things, too, while sitting there, and with such a remarkable happening in the near past to serve as a subject there was no end to the speculations two bright boys might indulge in.

To tell the truth, however, it was doubtful if the real facts would ever come out, for none of them ever met with Hank, the tramp, again. Hence it could only be surmised that he had man-



aged, in some strange way, to pull the boy from the river, where he was floating down the current. Thinking to have a companion in his travels about the country, he had restored him to life, though not to reason, since some blow had temporarily deprived Adolf of every recollection of the past.

Of course all of them were pretty tired, and when Rob finally announced that they had better be turning in no one offered any objection.

Preparation for the night did not take any great length of time. The fire they intended to keep going after a fashion, not so much because they expected to feel the need of the heat as the cheery way its glow dispelled the gloom that lay around them.

"You needn't count on me to 'tend fire during the night, Rob," laughed Merritt as they were making ready to lie down. "I'm that tired I don't believe a thunder clap would wake me up once I get to going."

"I'd like to offer my services," spoke up the ever-willing Tubby, "but I'm sorry to say I can't be depended on in that line. When the sand man throws his dust in my eyes I get stupid, and all of you know that I sleep like a log."

"A mighty noisy log, at that," chuckled Andy, but good-natured Tubby only grinned.

"I'll look after the fire part of the business," said Rob. "Somehow, I seem to wake up just about once every hour or two. If there is nothing doing, why, I just turn over and go to sleep again. So I'll promise to take care of the fire."

To tell the truth, this was a foregone conclusion. The others knew they could depend on the scout leader to be on the watch. In times past without number he had proven himself a true woodsman in this respect.

Rob had another idea in his mind, however, besides keeping "tabs" over the camp fire. This was in connection with Mr. Carmody, for he did not know just how far the man who had so lately been upon the borderland of insanity was to be trusted.

Plainly, then, Rob was uneasy. He found himself worried over certain matters. It was not so much that he anticipated any menace on the part of Mr. Carmody with regard to their own lives, but Rob remembered those wonderfully valuable Government plates which he and his chums had been commissioned to try and recover.

Just as he had hinted when talking the matter

over with Merritt, there must always be a little chance that Mr. Carmody might suffer a relapse.

If one of his old spells came over him, the impulse to destroy those stolen plates was apt to seize upon the man's unbalanced brain.

So Rob used a certain amount of discretion when picking out his place for sleeping. He wanted to be convenient to the fire, but above all other things it was Rob's desire to be able to know if Mr. Carmody attempted to leave the camp.

He believed that some subtle inner sense was sure to give him warning should the other start to make a move. Indeed, some of these light sleepers like Rob seem to be endowed with a sixth sense, somewhat after the manner of animals—that of instinct.

It was in this unsettled state of mind, then, that the astute scout leader finally threw himself down, with the avowed intention of securing such rest as he could.

Tubby, at least, never found the slightest difficulty about going to sleep. Once he began to yawn, and Tubby's mind soon lapsed into the stupid phase. He was already breathing heavily, and apparently far past the border of dreamland.

Andy lay alongside the fat chum, and with a reason in his madness, too, as Rob well knew. Should Tubby manage to roll over on his back he was almost certain to begin to snore, as stout people are apt to do.

Andy, knowing this to be almost a sure thing, meant to be close enough by so as to whack the offender vigorously on his shins and urge him to "turn over." Andy had been kept awake on previous occasions by trumpet blasts and wheezy groans; he did not intend to submit to the rank injustice any more so long as there were shins to kick.

Finally Rob settled down, firm in his belief that if Mr. Carmody, seized with an uncontrollable desire to demolish the hidden plates, attempted to leave the couch of hemlock boughs they had arranged for his occupancy, the fact would be communicated in some way to his brain.

At first, Rob could not get to sleep because so many things were crowding into his mind. This was a little strange, too, for as a usual thing the boy could force himself to forget everything save that he must find rest in slumber.

Some little time passed.

The fire crackled softly, for Rob had arranged

it so that the supply of fuel might be fed gradually, and thus last several hours.

Finally he managed by sheer will power to temporarily forget the recent excitement, and so passed away into sleep.

Just how long Rob remained in that condition he never really knew, but suddenly he opened his eyes. It seemed as though some one had actually given a tug at his sleeve, though Rob knew very well this could not be so.

The fire had burned pretty low. This would of itself seem to indicate that considerable time had elapsed since he lost consciousness.

Before starting out to throw additional wood on the smouldering brands, Rob, remembering his uneasiness with regard to Mr. Carmody, turned and looked in the direction of the spot where he knew the other had lain down.

No sooner had the scout done this than he received a distinct shock, for he saw that the gentleman was sitting upright.

With his heart beginning to pound violently within its prison walls, Rob watched to discover what the next move of Mr. Carmody might be. What would he do?

Would he stretch his arms, yawn, take a satis-

fied glance toward the place where Adolf slept, and then lie down again, or was Rob about to see him creep away from the camp, bent upon destroying those precious plates?

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## ORDERS FULFILLED.

Without raising his head, Rob managed to watch what was taking place. He feared that a crisis in the affairs of himself and three chums might be impending.

Of course Rob had already mentally mapped out the course of action to be pursued should the man who so lately had shown signs of being demented start to leave the camp.

His intentions could be easily guessed, and after coming so close to success Rob did not mean to allow his campaign to be ruined by a single mischance.

So he was resolved that should Mr. Carmody start to creep away he would hasten to awaken Andy and Merritt, with the avowed intention of following the man.

Tubby could be left to sleep on in happy ignorance concerning the exciting episode that was transpiring, and Adolf, too, need not be aroused,



since the three stout lads should be force enough to master one man.

They could creep after Mr. Carmody unbeknown to the gentleman, for their scout training ought to be sufficient for this. Then, after they decided from all the signs that the location of the hidden plates had been disclosed, they could overcome the demented man before he had a chance to injure the precious Government property.

There, he was certainly starting to get upon his feet now. Rob held his very breath with suspense as he saw a man start away after taking, first of all, a cautious glance around, looking especially toward the spot where his recovered son Adolf lay, and even scanning his—Rob's—position.

To the surprise of the scout leader, Mr. Carmody first of all stepped over to the fire. It could be seen that he moved with unusual care, as though anxious not to awaken any one of the five sleeping lads.

When next Rob discovered the man in the act of bending down and quietly placing some fresh fuel on the fire, he was surprised, and mystified as well.

But then, Rob reasoned, might not this be looked upon as only a cunning idea fomented in his partly crazed brain? If one of the boys happened to awaken, and saw him on his feet, the chances were they would suppose he had merely arisen to attend to the fire, and so would be satisfied to turn over and go to sleep again.

Reasoning after this manner, Rob saw no good excuse for changing his mind. He still believed that Mr. Carmody was bent upon seeking the hiding place of the stolen plates, with the intention of finally destroying the evidence against him.

Perhaps in the weeks that had elapsed since his secret flight from Washington he may have frequently been seized with symptoms of fear lest his crime be visited on his head. Yes, and doubtless the idea of sooner or later destroying all evidence must have often haunted the man's uneasy mind.

Now he was moving again. Rob raised his head a little from the small sack stuffed with fragrant hemlock boughs, and which had served him so nicely as a pillow.

"Now, I wonder what he means to do?" was what the boy whispered to himself, for instead

of starting directly off as Rob had fully expected him to do, Mr. Carmody had commenced to move in the direction of the spot close by where Adolf lay sleeping.

Eagerly Rob watched. Perhaps, after all, that suspicion of his had no real foundation in fact, and the man did not mean to render all their work useless by aiming to destroy the stolen plates.

The suspense was of short duration, but for all that Rob would not soon forget his experience.

He saw Mr. Carmody had now gained the side of the sleeping boy. Now he had bent over, sinking to his knees, and seemed to be looking long and intently.

All at once it struck Rob that there must have been a good reason for his adding fuel to the smouldering fire; he wanted more light so that he could feast his eyes on the beloved features of the son who being lost was found.

Yes, perhaps the poor man, upon arousing from his dreams, had found it difficult to believe so great a piece of good fortune had come to him, and, unable to resist the temptation, he had acted as Rob had seen.

There could no longer be any doubt of this a minute later, when Rob saw him raise his clasped hands and look up toward the star-decked sky.

Yes, he was praying; evidently giving thanks to God for the great miracle that had brought light out of darkness to his sorely-tried soul.

Rob felt strangely stirred.

After that Mr. Carmody once more lay down, and, all his fears set at rest, Rob, too, allowed sweet sleep to take possession of him.

And so morning found them all.

Nothing was done the next day. All of them were too much excited to settle down. Merritt did manage to make use of his camera, and took several snapshots of the group, Mr. Carmody and his recovered son being placed in the center of the pictures.

In times to come, those little mementoes of the occasion would remind them of the wonderful things that had taken place. They would also stand sponsors for the story told by the four scouts, which some fellows, who did not know their reputation for honesty and candor, might feel inclined to doubt.

Rob studied Mr. Carmody as the days passed.

He could plainly see that the other was worried over something, and the scout leader felt that he knew its character. He fancied that Martin was coming to have some recollection of the deed he had committed in his vague desire for revenge upon his imaginary enemies among the Government forces. It was plaguing him more and more, for his periods of abstraction seemed to increase as time passed.

Finally Rob decided that he ought to delay no longer, but tell the other how that remarkable commission had come to them through the mails, and with it the sealed orders under which they had finally started forth. He would impress upon Mr. Carmody the fact that no one meant to hold him responsible, and also that he would be welcomed back to Washington again.

There is really no need of going into details in connection with this last phase of the adventure. Rob had laid his plans skillfully, and carried them out with his accustomed accuracy. Nor did he make any mistake concerning the manner in which the gentleman would receive the communication.

Indeed, a wave of great relief spread over Mr. Carmody's face as he listened, and it was plainly

evident that he felt glad to accept the olive branch thus extended by Mr. Wainwright.

"Yes, I have been thinking it all over, Rob," he confessed humbly. "I must have done this strange thing when under the delusion that there were enemies who had taken my boy away from me. My mind is becoming clearer every day now, and first of all I would want to make all the amends possible. I have reason to hope that I did not harm those plates in the least, and it has given me more concern than I can describe trying to remember just what I must have done with them."

Rob, upon hearing him speak in this fashion, hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry. While undoubtedly it pleased the scout leader to understand that Mr. Carmody was sincerely anxious to make amends for his strange actions in taking the property of the United States Government, still there was an undercurrent in what the gentleman said that told Rob he and his three chums had not yet reached the end of the trail.

As always, the energetic lad threw himself soul and body into the game. Rob believed in the old maxim, "Strike while the iron is hot."

"Do you mean by that, sir," he went on to say

quickly, "you haven't so far been able to remember what became of the plates?"

"I'm sorry to tell you such seems to be the case, my boy," replied Mr. Carmody, while Tubby and Andy exchanged glances full of fresh dismay, since they had been under the impression the whole thing was all over but the shouting.

"But," Rob asked eagerly, "you don't remember of smashing them at any time, sir, I hope, perhaps when your mood chanced to be a bit ugly toward things in general, and some of those Government officials in particular?"

He almost held his breath while waiting for a reply to this pointed question. Mr. Carmody's forehead was wrinkled, and a thoughtful, wistful look crept into his eyes.

"I have tried many times to remember about that," he explained, "but there always seems to be some important little connecting link missing. I can distinctly recollect having the plates in my possession and gloating over them on several occasions."

"Try and remember, sir," Rob hastily remarked, "whether it was up in this region or at some other place."

"I have been cudgeling my brains over that,



Rob, and come to the positive conclusion it must have been up here rather than down along the bank of the Potomac."

"That sounds good to me, sir," declared the young scout leader. "Please explain what makes you feel so positive about it."

"For one thing," continued Mr. Carmody, "when I shut my eyes I can see a picture again and again of a figure sitting beside a large oak tree that is hollow at the base and unwrapping a package which, when spread open, proves to contain a number of plates such as Government notes of high denominations are printed from."

"That proves one thing," assented Rob, "but I wish you would go on and explain just how you feel so sure that hollow oak tree is around this Northern region and not down in Old Virginia."

"For a very good reason, Rob, as you will admit when you hear it. And, truth to tell, I must have taken a page out of your Boy Scout manual when I struck upon this idea. As I was saying, this picture comes vividly before me every time I try hard to remember. I know the plates must be hidden inside the cavity in that old oak, though utterly unable to even guess in

which direction it may lie from here. And, Rob, every time that picture flashes before me I can see a giant hemlock tree bending partly over, its fall stayed by the strong limbs of the oak."

Rob uttered a cry. Apparently he considered this a most important clue indeed. A leaning hemlock might be found by making a regular and systematic search. But that was not the best of it all, as Rob's next words proved.

"A hemlock tree, you say, sir? And in your mind that proves the location of the hollow oak to be up in this Northern region, because, as a rule, hemlocks are not found among the pines down along the Potomac? Is that it, Mr. Carmody?"

"To my mind, the proof seems overwhelming, my lad," replied the other.

"I think so, too," spoke up Merritt, who had been listening intently to all this talk, though never doubting the result, for he had the utmost confidence in Rob's ability to track things down.

"Well," continued the scout leader, with a relieved look on his face, "it seems to me that simplifies matters a whole lot. We've just got to find that oak tree with the leaning hemlock caught in its limbs."

"Will you lay out the whole section around here in squares, and try to have us cover every rod of the same?" asked Merritt.

"We may have to come to that yet," replied Rob, "but first of all why not try and make use of our scout education and see if we can't find that tree in short order?"

"I think I can give a guess what you're aiming to do," laughed Merritt, "and, unless I'm away off, it means following a trail."

"How about that, Rob?" demanded Tubby.

"Listen," Rob went on to explain. "From what Mr. Carmody says, I reckon he must have gone a number of times to that hollow oak just to handle the precious plates and feed the revenge hunger that he tells us had taken possession of him."

"I'm sure that's the truth, Rob," the other hastened to acknowledge.

"And," continued the scout leader, "it stands to reason that he would be apt to follow about the same route every time he took a notion to go there. So you see there must be something of a plainly marked trail leading back and forth, because, likely enough, that hollow oak lies within a mile of this spot."

"Bully for you, Rob!" exclaimed Merritt. "All we have to do, then, is to circle around and keep tabs of the ground. When we strike just such a trail the game is as good as won."

"Why not start in right away?" demanded Tubby, whose round face fairly glowed with animation.

"There's nothing to hinder," admitted Rob; "and the sooner those plates are found the better we'll all be pleased."

This being the consensus of opinion, they soon made a beginning. Rob led the way a short distance from headquarters.

"Now, you understand," he explained, "the camp is supposed to be the hub of this wheel, and the circuit we expect to make around the same can be likened to the tire or rim. When we get back to this spot again we will have concluded an entire revolution."

"Chances are we'll run across some sign long before that time," observed the confident Tubby, and really all the others shared this opinion also.

Accordingly the search began, and many pairs of eager eyes were constantly on the watch for signs of a well-defined trail as the little party continued to make progress.

Rob did not show any undue haste. It was always his way to make a thorough job, once he undertook anything.

Another thing was that, of necessity, they must keep gradually veering to the left in order to complete the circle they had in contemplation; and it rested with the leader to make sure this was systematically carried out.

As time passed, and they had succeeded in covering considerable territory without achieving any noteworthy result, Tubby began to grow somewhat weary. He also lost considerable of the sanguine spirit which had possessed him in the beginning of the search.

"Whee! It doesn't seem to turn up at all, Rob," he complained, using his bandanna to mop his streaming red face, "and by now I guess we're two-thirds of the way around the circle."

"All of that," admitted Rob complacently, "but haven't you often noticed that the thing you're looking for turns up at the very last notch? Now, it wouldn't surprise me if we ran across that trail close to where we started out."

"That's the way things often go," added Merriitt.

"Then we ought to have started the other way around," Tubby told them.

He had hardly spoken than Rob pointed eagerly at a line of bushes ahead.

"Unless I'm greatly mistaken, something or somebody has passed through those bushes back and forth. Fact is, we'd have to go far out of our way to avoid them."

Of course they all started on a run at that, and presently excited cries announced the fact that an important discovery had been made.

"Here's the trail, as plain as the nose on my face!" exclaimed Merritt delightedly, as he bent over to feast his eyes on the positive footprints corresponding with those the scouts had already noted as made by Mr. Carmody's shoes, for it happened that he wore rubber heels, and the marks were often quite legible.

Away they went like a pack of eager hounds, and Mr. Carmody was really as excited as any of the rest. Several times he announced that he now plainly remembered certain features of the landscape that were out of the common run.

Before ten minutes had elapsed after the finding of the trail Andy cried out that he had discovered a large oak and a leaning hemlock ahead.



When presently they arrived on the spot it was by unanimous consent left to Mr. Carmody to thrust his arm into the gaping aperture. When he again drew it out his fingers clutched a well-wrapped package.

"Here are the plates, safe and sound, and I hand them over into your keeping, Rob, only too gladly," said the gentleman, apparently throwing a great load from his mind.

"Well," laughed the scout leader, "let's head back to camp now, and later on we can decide just what shall be done with the recovered plates."

In the end, they were sent by express to Washington by Rob, direct to Mr. Wainwright, with a full and lengthy account of the wonderful way in which the boys, while acting under sealed orders, had been allowed to recover them.

Mr. Wainwright saw that they were rewarded in a suitable manner by an official letter that could be framed and placed in the room at Headquarters. He also sent a check to cover what expense they may have been put to; but as scouts are prohibited, in most cases, from accepting any reward for services rendered, the boys had to hunt up some worthy charity to which they could do-



nate the money, so that several poor families in and around the home town profited through their latest success.

They are apt to hear often from Adolf and his happy father, who went back to their former life at the National Capital; for grateful hearts are not going to forget such heavy obligations as the Carmodys, father and son, found themselves laboring under in connection with the boys of the Eagle Patrol.

Rob and his chums participated in another series of stirring adventures before a great while. It chanced that this brought them in touch with the Government officials at Washington, as may be judged from the title of the next story, "The Boy Scouts' Campaign for Preparedness," which we hope the reader will hasten to procure, and enjoy fully as much, it is hoped, as he has the present volume.

THE END.

HURST & COMPANY'S BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

---

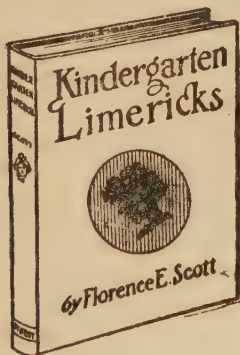
*A Volume of Cheerfulness in Rhyme and Picture*

# KINDERGARTEN LIMERICKS

1]

By FLORENCE E. SCOTT

*Pictures by Arthur O. Scott with a Foreword  
by Lucy Wheelock*



The book contains a rhyme for every letter of the alphabet, each illustrated by a full page picture in colors. The verses appeal to the child's sense of humor without being foolish or sensational, and will be welcomed by kindergartners for teaching rhythm in a most entertaining manner.

*Beautifully printed and bound. In attractive box. Price, Postpaid One Dollar.*

---

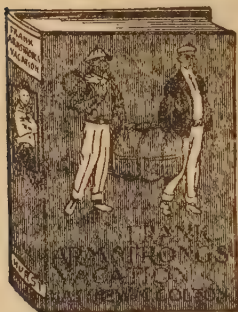
HURST & COMPANY, Publishers, NEW YORK

HURST & COMPANY'S BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

## FRANK ARMSTRONG SERIES

2] By MATTHEW M. COLTON

Cloth Bound. Illustrated. Price, 60c. per vol., postpaid



### *Frank Armstrong's Vacation*

How Frank's summer experiences with his boy friends make him into a sturdy young athlete through swimming, boating and baseball contests, and a tramp through the Everglades, is the subject of this splendid story.

### *Frank Armstrong at Queens*

We find among the jolly boys at Queen's School, Frank, the student-athlete, Jimmy, the baseball enthusiast, and Lewis, the unconsciously-funny youth who furnishes comedy for every page that bears his name. Fall and winter sports between intensely rival school teams are expertly described.

### *Frank Armstrong's Second Term*

The gymnasium, the track and the field make the background for the stirring events of this volume, in which David, Jimmy, Lewis, the "Wee One" and the "Codfish" figure, while Frank "saves the day."

### *Frank Armstrong, Drop Kicker*

With the same persistent determination that won him success in swimming, running and baseball playing, Frank Armstrong acquired the art of "drop-kicking," and the Queen's football team profits thereby.

### *Frank Armstrong, Captain of the Nine*

Exciting contests, unexpected emergencies, interesting incidents by land and water make this story of Frank Armstrong a strong tale of school-life, athletic success, and loyal friendships.

### *Frank Armstrong at College*

With the development of this series, the boy characters have developed until in this, the best story of all, they appear as typical college students, giving to each page the life and vigor of the true college spirit.

Six of the best books of College Life Stories published. They accurately describe athletics from start to finish.

Any book sent postpaid upon receipt of 60 cents, or we will send the six for \$3.50.

---

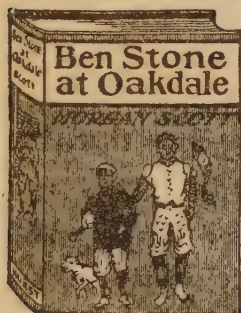
HURST & COMPANY, Publishers, NEW YORK

# **OKDALE ACADEMY SERIES**

**Stories of Modern School Sports**

By **MORGAN SCOTT.**

**Cloth Bound. Illustrated. Price, 60c. per vol., postpaid**



## **BEN STONE AT OKDALE.**

Under peculiarly trying circumstances Ben Stone wins his way at Oakdale Academy, and at the same time enlists our sympathy, interest and respect. Through the enmity of Bern Hayden, the loyalty of Roger Eliot and the clever work of the "Sleuth," Ben is falsely accused, championed and vindicated.

## **BOYS OF OKDALE ACADEMY.**

"One thing I will claim, and that is that all Grants fight open and square and there never was a sneak among them." It was Rodney Grant, of Texas, who made the claim to his friend, Ben Stone, and this story shows how he proved the truth of this statement in the face of apparent evidence to the contrary.

## **RIVAL PITCHERS OF OKDALE.**

Baseball is the main theme of this interesting narrative, and that means not only clear and clever descriptions of thrilling games, but an intimate acquaintance with the members of the teams who played them. The Oakdale Boys were ambitious and loyal, and some were even disgruntled and jealous, but earnest, persistent work won out.

## **OKDALE BOYS IN CAMP.**

The typical vacation is the one that means much freedom, little restriction, and immediate contact with "all outdoors." These conditions prevailed in the summer camp of the Oakdale Boys and made it a scene of lively interest.

## **THE GREAT OKDALE MYSTERY.**

The "Sleuth" scents a mystery! He "follows his nose." The plot thickens! He makes deductions. There are surprises for the reader—and for the "Sleuth," as well.

## **NEW BOYS AT OKDALE.**

A new element creeps into Oakdale with another year's registration of students. The old and the new standards of conduct in and out of school meet, battle, and cause sweeping changes in the lives of several of the boys.

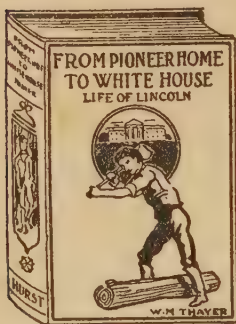
Any volume sent postpaid upon receipt of price.

**HURST & COMPANY, - Publishers - NEW YORK**

## Log Cabin to White House Series

4] LIVES OF CELEBRATED AMERICANS

Cloth Bound. Illustrated. Price, 60c., per vol., postpaid



**FROM BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD**  
(The Life of Benjamin Franklin). By *Wm. M. Thayer*.

Benjamin Franklin was known in the scientific world for his inventions and discoveries, in the diplomatic world because of his statesmanship, and everywhere, because of his sound judgment, plain speaking, and consistent living.

**FROM FARM HOUSE TO WHITE HOUSE** (The Life of George Washington). By *Wm. M. Thayer*.

The story of the hatchet and other familiar incidents of the boyhood and young manhood of Washington are included in this book, as well as many less well-known accounts of his experiences as surveyor, soldier, emissary,

leader, and first president of the United States.

**FROM LOG CABIN TO WHITE HOUSE** (The Life of James A. Garfield). By *Wm. M. Thayer*.

It was a long step from pioneer home in Ohio where James A. Garfield was born, to the White House in Washington, and that it was an interesting life-journey one cannot doubt who reads Mr. Thayer's account of it.

**FROM PIONEER HOME TO WHITE HOUSE** (The Life of Abraham Lincoln). By *Wm. M. Thayer*.

No President was ever dearer to the hearts of his people than was homely, humorous "Honest Abe."

To read of his mother, his early home, his efforts for an education, and his rise to prominence is to understand better his rare nature and practical wisdom.

**FROM RANCH TO WHITE HOUSE** (The Life of Theodore Roosevelt). By *Edward S. Ellis, A. M.*

Every boy and girl is more or less familiar with the experiences of Mr. Roosevelt as Colonel and President, but few of them know him as the boy and man of family and school circles and private citizenship.

Mr. Ellis describes Theodore Roosevelt as a writer, a hunter, a fighter of "graft" at home and of Spaniards in Cuba, and a just and vigorous defender of right.

**FROM TANNERY TO WHITE HOUSE** (The Life of Ulysses S. Grant). By *Wm. M. Thayer*.

Perhaps General Grant is best known to boys and girls as the hero of the famous declaration: "I will fight it out on this line if it takes all summer."

We will mail any of the above books prepaid at 60 cents each or the six for \$3.50.











